

AUSTRALIAN SIGNPOST

Australian Signpost

AN ANTHOLOGY

Edited for the Canberra Fellowship
of Australian Writers by

T. A. G. HUNGERFORD



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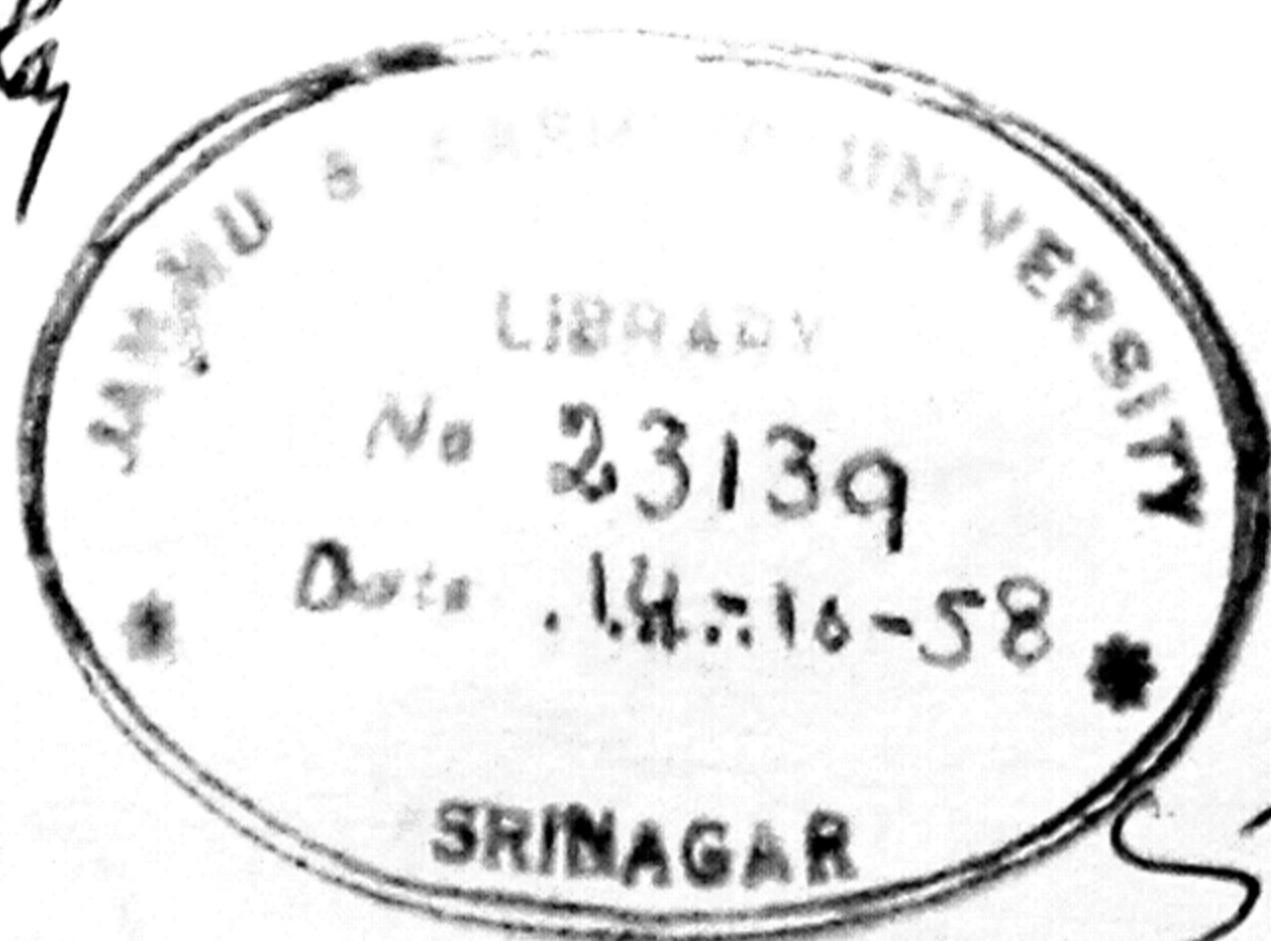


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Foreword

FROM a study of anthologies and of criticisms of anthologies, one is led inevitably to the conclusion that no one collection can hope to please everybody.

While, naturally, endeavouring to present a cross section of Australian writing acceptable to as wide as possible a public and in authentic terms to say to people of other nations, "This is a picture of Australia, as true as we can make it," still an anthology such as this must reflect primarily the preferences of whoever compiles it. The contention of the old shearer's cook that "If you cook to please yourself, you're sure of pleasing some one" is as good a plan as any for making a selection.

As with *Australia Writes*, its first venture of this nature, the Canberra branch of the Fellowship of Australian Writers has endeavoured to make *Australian Signpost* a national undertaking; and in that endeavour it has met with valuable assistance from writers, literary groups and periodicals throughout Australia. Nor has it lost sight of its primary objective—to provide another outlet for new and established writers of Australian prose and poetry.

Thus in this anthology new writers like Mary Pinney, Roy Maley, Eleanor Smith and Neilma Sidney take their place among a vigorous body of contemporary writers and with such honoured names as Katharine Susannah Prichard, Alan Marshall and others.

Although I am responsible finally for its shape and contents, the book owes a great deal to other members of the editorial committee—Norman Bartlett, Manning Clark, Laurie Fitzhardinge, Russel Ward, Mrs. L. F. H. Rees, the Secretary of the Fellowship. David Campbell was responsible for the selection and grouping of the poetry in this, as he was in the first book.

The considerable work of reading and evaluating the hundreds of contributions received was carried out by the committee in an honorary capacity and during my absence from Australia with an Antarctic expedition, they went ahead with the planning of the book

and all the correspondence, reading and discussion arising from the task.

This is the year in which Australia is host nation for the Olympic Games; thousands of competing athletes, and scores of thousands of visitors will, one hopes, become familiar with the Australian way of life, with our activities and cities and scenery, with our culture and work and relaxations.

This is distilled between the covers of *Australian Signpost* for those who will be unable to see it for themselves; distilled from the mystical philosophy of the aborigines, the humour and toughness of Australian servicemen, the pattern of our early history and the nature of our folk-ballads, the racy dialogue of King's Cross and the heat-glazed journeyings of a drover, the not-quite Occidental atmosphere of Darwin, a story of New Guinea, bitterness and disillusionment in a great Australian city.

Through the work of current Australian writers, one hopes *Australian Signpost* will pick up again the ancient thread of the olympiad of the arts, and will demonstrate to our guests that we are eager and able to compete with them in cultural as well as in physical fields.

T. A. G. HUNGERFORD.

Canberra, 1956.

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*

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Rosemary Dobson

Absent Friends

CATHERINE was only seven when Edward Burren first came to live with them, and though she always called him Grandfather he was not her grandfather at all but a first, and much older, cousin of her father. To her mother, Millicent, he was a "solution".

"He's *such* a solution," Cathie heard her saying to her friends. "It means I'll be able to keep Tarree on now without worrying at all." Tarree was the only good thing Henry Webster had brought to his marriage with Millicent. Tarree—and, of course, there was Catherine. Millicent loved both her daughter and the house with intensity; but, whereas her affection for her daughter was half-humorous and wholly reserved, she loved Tarree passionately, worked for it slavishly, and was continually rewarded by its beauty. The house was at Long Hill, a suburb on the north shore of Sydney Harbour. The hill was a long, narrow peninsula, and, because it was difficult to reach, the suburb had retained something of the character of the outlying village it had been in the early days of settlement. Millicent and Catherine sometimes went to town by the infrequent ferry. Edward Burren hardly went out at all.

It was a strange coincidence that Edward's sister, Mary Burren, should die two days after Henry Webster, and not unnatural that the solicitor who looked after the affairs of both families should suggest the solution to the problems made by the two deaths. The Burrens' house in one of the eastern suburbs was sold, and old Mr. Burren, bringing with him some furniture and packing-cases, installed himself in two of the large rooms at the back of Tarree.

The house, a stone one, had been built many, many years ago, and Henry's father and grandfather had both lived in it until their deaths. It was a two-storied building, and from the stone terrace before it the lawn sloped gently down to the water. Long-shuttered French windows opened on to the veranda which ran round two sides of the house, and the water threw up the sunlight which glimmered on the pale, green walls and high ceilings inside. Wistaria and grape-vines

twisted over the columns supporting the roof of the veranda, and about the house there was always a stir and shifting of shadows and lights from the vines, the lattices and the half-closed swinging shutters.

Because of this soft animation of light and shade Millicent had cleared the accumulated decorations from the walls, and emptied the rooms of all but the heavy furniture Grandfather Webster had had made from red Hawkesbury cedar. The floorboards of Baltic pine she polished till they glowed with a subdued golden light. Cathie knew that she must keep clear of her mother's enthusiastic energy on polishing days, which were Saturdays. She slipped out on to the veranda and round to Grandfather's room, tapping lightly at the door into the garden.

In this room there was the same delicate movement of shadow. The morning sunlight slipped over and under the leaves of the apple-tree outside the window. Grandfather was the still centre of this gentle, continuous movement. He was engaged in his usual morning occupation. Country newspapers from all over New South Wales, and the Melbourne papers as well, arrived for him in the post every day, and these he studied for three or four hours, sitting upright at the table in his high-backed leather chair. At midday he always turned on the wireless and listened sagely to the weather reports and river heights. "Hastings, Hunter and Manning . . ." the announcer would say, and Grandfather would nod with the air of one completely familiar with the vagaries of rivers.

Cathie knew from his stories that Grandfather had lived until not very long ago in the country. But she did not know that he had bought Widgeewaa, that famous Riverina property, with borrowed money many years ago, and had developed it to such a degree that its efficiency and productiveness had become a legend.

When her mother called them to lunch Cathie and Grandfather had sat for nearly an hour in a pleasant silence; he reading his newspapers and she looking for about the thousandth time at his collection—photographs of prize bulls and picnic races, clippings from newspapers, family portraits, and faded diary entries and rainfall records in Grandfather's own disciplined, distinguished hand. Now he rose, stretched himself, straightened his coat and patted the top of Cathie's head. It was the only gesture of affection he was ever known to make.

Before they left the room he tidied the piled-up collection, taking up in his hand for a moment the photograph Cathie had just put down. She knew well enough what it was, having asked and been told

many times. It was Miss Anna Mantini and Mr. Edward Burren at the Albury Picnic Races. How handsome was Mr. Burren with his dashing moustaches, his bright brown eyes, his gloved hand holding a riding-crop! How elegant Miss Mantini in her riding-habit, looking not at Mr. Burren, not at the camera, looking indeed right out of the picture!

Grandfather put it gently down on the table.

In the dining-room Grandfather said grace and began immediately to talk. It was one of his anecdote days. Everything that he spoke about on such occasions seemed to Cathie to be on the most tremendous scale, and many things were strange to her. If Grandfather recalled a meal from his very early days it was all pannikins and shouting, packing-case tables and saddles on the floor. If he recalled a meal at Widgeewaa he spoke of cruets, decanters, side-dishes, epergnes and finger-bowls.

Millicent ran her house to a calculated degree of economy, and her appointments for the most part were of the simplest. Twice a year, however, at Christmas and on April the seventh, Grandfather spent the morning on his knees before the sea-chest in his dressing-room. From it he drew forth heavy silver, wine-glasses of many shapes and candlesticks. These were polished and set on Grandfather Webster's oval table, and a banquet was laid. And on successive April-the-sevenths (there had been three such occasions at Tarree) Grandfather rose, wine-glass in hand, declaimed "Absent friends", drank deeply and thereafter appeared much moved.

Today, however, was merely August the fifth, and Cathie, after her uncommunicative morning, was restless, bobbing up and down in her chair, and casting sidelong glances out of the window. Grandfather leant forward.

"You may have heard me speak," he said, "of Miss Anna Mantini."

Cathie wriggled. This was how Grandfather began so many of his courteous admonitory talks. Always, "You may perhaps have heard me mention the name of Miss Anna Mantini . . ." or "Miss Anna Mantini, about whom I have probably spoken before . . ."

Miss Anna Mantini, so high-spirited, so elegant, always sat at the table perfectly upright, so slender, her hands folded quietly in her lap. How beautiful she was! How well could Cathie imagine her!

"Why, I remember once," said Grandfather, "when I visited the home of Miss Anna Mantini's parents at Gundagai . . ."

How many anecdotes there were! The concerts in the home of Miss Anna Mantini, the singing round the piano. The young man who brought his music secreted in his folded umbrella whom nobody

asked to sing, and how when they departed and it was raining . . .

Millicent thought: This grown-up talk all the time must be tiring for the child. She dismissed Cathie with a nod and broke into the stream of reminiscences.

"Edward," she said, "I thought that I might take Cathie to Melbourne with me for two weeks of her school holidays next month. If I ask Mrs. Bucket to come here and look after you will you be all right? I don't want to leave the house but Helen has asked me, and I think it would do us both good."

"I quite agree. Do please go by all means," said Grandfather in his courteous, precise voice. "Mrs. Bucket and I will agree very amicably to avoid each other whenever possible, and I shall be busy with my reading." He brushed his moustache and passed his hand over his hair. "But I shall, needless to say, be very glad to see you back. One's friends, nowadays, so scattered . . ."

His voice trailed away. He rose stiffly, patted Millicent on the head and walked out into the garden.

Millicent had sent the luggage ahead the day before so their departure from Tarree was tranquil, though her heart was wrenched as she closed the front door behind them. Grandfather, the keys in his pocket, accompanied them down to the ferry. Cathie, excited, ran ahead of them, skittering from side to side of the road. When they reached the wharf the ferry drew in, and for Cathie her brass was shining in the sun, her woodwork was like new-peeled bark, and her whistle sounded out all the music of a fun-fair.

"Oh, Grandfather," she said, "won't you come with us on the ferry into town? Then you could go back again on the ferry, you know."

Grandfather shook his head. "To tell you the truth," he replied, "I'm afraid I'm not very good at walking up that narrow little gangplank over the water."

"Poor Grandfather," thought Cathie. "Afraid of the water."

Millicent and Edward stood together a moment longer on the wharf. "I have the address here safely, Edward," she said. "Shall I give any message from you?"

After dinner the previous evening Edward had said to her, "I think you may have heard me speak of . . ."

"Yes, Edward," she had interrupted, "I have." And their eyes had met with a rare and pleasing intimacy; hers, gently humorous, his, disconcerted, but grateful. "I would be pleased if, while you are in Melbourne, you would visit this lady. I have here her address." And handing her a folded sheet of notepaper he had bidden her good-night with a finality that closed the subject.

Now she repeated "Is there any message?"

"You must hurry on to the ferry," Edward answered, and added, "Only my *very warmest* regards."

In Melbourne their days were full of animation and excitement. Helen, Millicent's sister, intended that she should have a bright time. Eight years of loveless marriage to the cold, pale Henry—or, rather, Helen explained to her husband, seven, for she was sure that they had loved each other in a puzzled, dwindling way for a year—and then three years devoted to Cathie, Edward and the house, well, it was time, she said, that Millicent had a little gaiety.

Robert, Helen's husband, agreed, finding almost incomprehensible any other life than their own easy, friendly one; and they drew up a crowded programme of entertainment. To her surprise Millicent found herself enjoying it all immensely. Her face took on colour and liveliness. She enjoyed compliments, and compliments—except on her capability and efficiency in running Tarree—had not come her way for a long time. And it was pleasing to be always so certainly the guest-of-honour. Cathie, too, was happily occupied, and was inseparable from her young cousins.

Three days before she was to return to Sydney Millicent was horrified to realise that she had not undertaken the visit on Edward's behalf. Her sense of defection was the only cloud in that shining fortnight. On Thursday they were to return. Cathie, who had lost two fillings owing to much unaccustomed toffee-eating, must visit the dentist twice more, Helen had bought tickets for a concert, and there was some shopping still to be done.

At two o'clock on Wednesday Millicent snatched Cathie from the dentist, and bore her rapidly by train and taxi to the address Edward had given. "We are going to visit a friend of Grandfather's," she explained hurriedly in the taxi, and otherwise was completely abstracted.

The name would *not* come into her head. How maddening of Edward, punctilious and helpful in all matters but this, to be so wilfully, blindly unhelpful. He had given the name "Miss Anna Mantini". Edward had never referred to it, but of course Millicent was familiar with the story. Miss Mantini, the beautiful, the gay, the beloved had married Another. It was then that the stunned Edward had borrowed so riskily and bought Widgeewaa, channelling all his furious grief, his strength and his ambition into work, work, and work, till he became the wealthiest, most eligible and certainly the most irreversible bachelor in the whole of the Riverina.

The house was a large, rather untidy one, set a little back in a garden that fronted a busy main road. To Millicent's embarrassment, unobserved by Cathie, who dawdled on the path, she had to word her inquiry in a most confused manner. "I would like to see an elderly lady whose married name I do not remember, but who was Miss Anna Mantini many years ago."

"You'd mean Mrs. Williams, perhaps," said the woman at the door. Yes, Millicent remembered now with relief.

"It's on the second floor at the top of the stairs, and her name's on the door."

The woman closed the front door behind them. Millicent, suddenly smitten by Cathie's forlorn face and subdued air, remembered that the child had been to the dentist and held out a hand to her. They started together up the stairs.

Cathie hung behind her mother as they entered the room. It was dark and so crowded with furniture, pictures and bric-à-brac that they hardly knew where to stop. The woman who rose from a chair by the gasfire was stooped, and she held her hands in front of her as people sometimes do who have difficulty in seeing.

Millicent at once apologised for the suddenness of their unannounced visit and murmured Edward's name. The old woman cut her short, making little fluttering movements with her hands.

"And this is Catherine," she said, bending a little towards the child, "and in a moment we shall have some tea. This is a very comfortable place," she went on, turning to Millicent. "Oh, I am very comfortable, all my things round me, and three good meals a day. Not dear, either. Yes, I have heard of Miss Catherine from Mr. Burren. Had things been otherwise—yes, however. And you know I hear from Mr. Burren every year on my birthday. On April the seventh Mrs. Pallent always says to me—a very kind woman, she is—'Here's your letter from Sydney.'"

Cathie from her stool in the darkness seemed to explode on a deep breath. Too concerned in the taxi with the after-effects of her visit to the dentist, she had not pressed her mother for information about "Grandfather's friend" whom they were going to see. Now she said in alarm, "Mother—April the seventh. And Grandfather—then, this lady . . .?"

"Yes, dear," said Millicent hurriedly, "perhaps Mrs. Williams will allow you to look at the things on that little table."

When Cathie visited with her mother she always played the same game, quietly, unobserved. She would look all round the room and decide what she would choose if she were allowed to take away from

it any one thing. Now, however, she was too concerned, too puzzled to begin. And it would have been such an ideal room for the game. There were calendars, pictures, little pottery figures, a brass knocker.

"From my daughter in England," said Mrs. Williams, seeing the child's gaze on the knocker. "Such a good daughter she is," she said, turning again to Millicent, "with her own three girls now. You know that my two sons—twins, they were—were killed at Gallipoli. And Kathleen . . ." Here Millicent stopped her, seeing her agitation. Yes, Mary Burren had told her. Kathleen was the daughter who had run away at twenty; and her mother had never heard from her again.

"Ah, yes," said Mrs. Williams. "Well—had things been otherwise. Now the little girl might like to see my chess-set."

She rose slowly and brought from a drawer a small mahogany box which she gave to Cathie.

"Mr. Edward Burren taught me to play chess," she told her. "We had many, many good games together."

"Grandfather doesn't play chess any more," said Cathie. She opened the box where the exquisitely-shaped ivory figures lay in their bed of green velvet. One by one she took them out and ranged them on the table. Fitted in the lid was a folding chess-board, and this she took out, too. From behind it slipped a piece of notepaper. It was a valentine.

There were two hearts linked by an arrow, a wreath of roses, two bluebirds and a shield-shaped space in the centre. In this space was written *To A.M.*, and then *A wish*, and under that

*I wish as you wander the long roads of Time
That your life be all Sweetness and Roses and Rhyme.*

Oh, Cathie knew the writing. Yes, Cathie knew the writing. It was Grandfather's, and this lady, so old and bent and fluttery, *she* was Miss Anna Mantini of whom—Miss Anna Mantini of the disciplined lively grace; Miss Mantini who held herself so well, with hands folded like two lilies in her lap! Cold and bitter disappointment welled up and became tears in Cathie's eyes. It was her first great disillusionment. She turned appealingly to her mother, but Millicent was bent forward listening to Miss Mantini.

"And since that night when I told him I was going to marry Mr. Williams," she was saying, "I never saw Mr. Burren again. He was so good, though, always. You know, Mr. Williams and I moved to our little holding outside Gundagai when we married. Mr. Williams was often away. And in the bad rains, at the time when my sons were going to be born, why, Mr. Burren swam the river two nights

a week for six weeks with his clothes in a bundle on his head, and my husband's letters with them, and left the letters in the mailbox. No, I never saw him again."

Grandfather swimming a flooded river! Grandfather, who was afraid of the water under the ferry-plank! Cathie, her hands pressed palms down on the stool on each side of her, was astonished. She wanted to hear more.

But Millicent rose, taking Miss Mantini's nervous hands in her own. "We must go now," she told her, "or you'll be tired out."

"And no tea," said the old lady. "I was going to make you some tea on my gas-ring. In the old days in the country nobody ever visited without refreshment."

"We are going back to Sydney tomorrow," said Millicent, "and we'll tell Mr. Burren, who so often speaks of you, how well you are looking. Shall I give him any message from you?"

Miss Anna Mantini looked neither at Millicent nor Cathie, nor indeed anywhere in the room at all. To Cathie, for that moment, it was exactly the expression on her face in the photograph taken at the Albury Picnic Races. But her gaze returned to Millicent.

"I should like to be remembered . . . Yes, if things had been otherwise . . . If you would remember me *most kindly* to Mr. Burren . . ."

On the way back to Sydney in the train the next day Millicent tried to explain to Cathie. "Old people like to think of each other as they once were," she said. "Grandfather remembers Mrs. Williams as she was before she was married, when she was Miss Mantini." Heavens, she thought, how bad I am at this. She realised that she had very rarely tried to help the child by taking her into her confidence. And she thought: I must try to be better, to think less about the house. After all, Cathie and Edward are both dependent on me, and I love them both very dearly.

"It was a good story about Grandfather swimming the river, wasn't it?"

"Oh, yes," said Cathie with emphasis. "Mother, when will we be back?"

On Friday morning they walked off the ferry and up the familiar road, a little tired after the night spent in the train. Grandfather was waiting for them in Tarree's doorway.

Cathie ran down the path. "Grandfather," she called out, "we had a lovely time, and we went and saw Miss Anna Mantini, and she reminded me of the photograph at the Albury Picnic Races."

Ethel Anderson

Wildflower Garden

EARTH is no ornament. The maker of an Australian wildflower garden, therefore, should strew the soil with sheets of white, grainy river-sand, free from lime, for against this light background the graces of the smallest shrubs will be clearly etched. A kind sky will do a like service for the taller plants, and since our wildflowers are so exquisitely imagined, each variety should stand, as a bride does, a little apart from its fellows. Beautiful shadows will thus decorate and subdue the sand.

The paths of a native garden should be of cream, shelly gravel, between which flattering nimbus and the earth's bright counterpane of sand the naive charms of a border of trigger-flowers or Qualup Bells—flowers which have all the éclat of butterflies—will receive due emphasis.

Trigger-flowers, like London Pride, sport a tuft of ribbon-grass. Their puce, carnivorous flowerets, hoisted on wiry stems, have curious hammers set below their petals, which, springing back at a touch, imprison their prey. Erecting, when well-watered, a band of eighteenth-century lolly-pink above olive-grey tussocks, trigger-flowers neatly assert the edges of walks, attracting snails not at all.

Next the trigger-flowers the marsh-loving, ambrosial brown boronia, its lime-lined petals resembling a medley of beetles and buttercups, may grow beside native roses, pink myrtles and that heath-leaved dillwynia which is as vivid as cassia. While orange banksias back these very well, red bottle-brushes may soften the rigid magnificence of a hedge of waratahs, and the saffron-daisy (*Craspedia chrysanthia*) should, in its exuberance, carpet the ground beneath the lemon-scented gum, which is so encrusted with silvery-frosted hairs that it might be thought to be Esau's blood-brother. Queensland winter-flowering wattles, their foliage also grey, look well beside *Hibbertia diffusa*, a most elegant shrub rosetted in primrose. Where there are rocks, the willow-leaved crowea will take shelter under them.

Both fluffy with powder-puffs of those clustered stamens which in the mimosa pass for flowers, the two acacias, *floribunda* and *discolor*, may outface each other. *Grevillea buxifolia* must grow alone. It is too astounding. On panicles of Indian-red threads an inch long are poised snippets of ravelled, off-white wool, tricked out—much as a deft fisherman tricks out a Wickham's Fancy—in the semblance of long-lipped pitchers. Darting freely upwards, every single spray of *Grevillea buxifolia* is tipped with such tassels. Velvety flannel flowers, their points dipped in green, might be allowed under it. No coloured neighbour should challenge its subtleties.

Then, Western Australian *leschenaultia*—grown in gravel soil—will bring into a garden the brightest blue in the world. Neither Alpine gentians, nor Sicilian hyacinths—the “swart, letter'd hyacinths” of Theocritus—not even Scottish blue-bells, are as blue as *Leschenaultia biloba*. Bushes of purple, pea-flowered hovea, fringed wood-violet and lavender-tinted orchids, put beside it, heighten its splendours; a bed of black Kangaroo Paws would further intensify them, for a chic use of black is one of the distinctions of our native flora.

It is usual to enclose a garden.

Whereas in England, hedges, neatly clipped, or brick walls crowned, often, with urns or a plaster coping, suit perfectly the English lawns, or the elms, oaks and birches that overtop them, such enclosures are not in harmony with the atmosphere of the bush. Wattle hurdles stained with creosote better become it.

Birds may enrich a too oppressive silence, or fountains lend a pleasant use for ears, or sunlight charm or shade seduce, but it is the horizontal lines of paths and fences that square the vertical of trees, stabilise the uncertainties of leaves and boughs and give to a well-planned garden that mathematical security which ensures its first essential, peace. Because of this, because the surrounding trees rise, sometimes, to a height of two hundred feet, care should be taken that these wattle hurdles should be meticulously plaited and perfectly aligned. White clematis, black-a-vised desert-peas, purple false sarsaparilla and red-throated wonga-wonga vines (called sometimes supple-jacks) would, at intervals, fitly adorn such fences.

Beyond the hurdles the satin-bright boles of the candle-box and eucalyptus trees which, as they recede, distil in the distance a blue mist, may be varied by Illawarra flame-trees, fire-wheels and the two families of Christmas bush, those of the eastern branch glowing red,

the western, waving orange plumes as ornate and luxuriant as ostrich feathers.

European embellishments, such as the belvedere, the gazebo, the ha-ha, the maze, fountains, pergolas, archways, arcades, pavements and dovecots do not well consort with our Antipodean simplicities. We have no history but natural history, no great architect but nature. A pool and a waterfall are, however, both admissible.

If the garden be laid out—as is most desirable—in a four-acre clearing among gum-trees, the pond should be dug well out of reach of falling leaves, boughs or bark, and to cut down the loss by evaporation reeds should be planted completely round it, as reeds, being good radiators, cause dew to be deposited upon their tips, and this trickles down into the pond.

The pool should be large. Though it need not be more than fourteen inches deep, it is best to have it quite an acre in extent; water-birds will then frequent it.

To a fair-sized pool will come the wind-god's children, azure kingfishers; and red-necked avocets—Painted Ladies. Though crakes and water-rails, being so shy, may hardly be hoped for, if water-lilies grow there, the lotus-bird (the Lily-Trotter) may visit it. Dabchicks are a certainty. Coots, ibis (called the Farmer's Friend), egrets, herons and cranes will come if the pool be large; but to attract them, it must be very large and well planted with sedges.

The runnel that feeds the pool should be terraced to fall into it from a height. Violets that love to lie under a fall may air their tender beauties there. Umbrella ferns, colt's foot, hare's foot and maidenhair ferns, together with the lovely, orchidaceous sprays of rock-lilies, may fringe both pool and channel.

The scents natural to such a garden would be of a delectable pungency, a clean-cut fragrance like the perfume of rosemary and lavender, but surpassing both. These would all be health-giving aromas; they would not, like exotics, incite to languor, particularly the quintessence of the lemon-scented boronia which is of a great and invigorating sweetness, and very far-carrying.

In such a haunt as this a child might learn to love the unique glories of his own native land, and some flower which had there delighted him in childhood would, in process of time, become for him a true and significant symbol for it; and he would then discard the alien rose.

Russel Ward

Waltzing Matilda

THIS article does not set out to tell the true and complete story of "Waltzing Matilda". It is unlikely that such a story will ever be written. In the last seven hundred years or so, thousands of men have penned millions of words about Robin Hood; yet no one knows exactly when he lived or who he was. What chance have we then, in only about seventy years, of finding out all about the legendary leap of the jolly swagman?

True, it is easy enough to find the quantity of greasy wool exported from Sydney in 1863; much easier than it is obtain reliable economic statistics about the England of Robin Hood's time. With a little more trouble we may find what Henry Parkes said at Tenterfield in 1889, or even who laid the foundation stone of the Sydney Town Hall and what made him want to do it. But no one wants to know the answers.

With "Waltzing Matilda" the case is different. A song which touches the imaginations of a great many ordinary people automatically breeds almost as many authorities as it has singers; and when the authorities flatly contradict each other, who is to sift fact from legend?

One letter sent to Dr. Thomas Wood, author of *Cobbers*, categorically stated that "Banjo" Paterson wrote "Waltzing Matilda" on the veranda of the manager's house at Cassada sugar plantation, out of Mackay, in 1887. This authority added that he "remembered the occasion quite well" as he was five years old at the time. There are other and more impressive "eyewitness" accounts and other theories; but in spite of them all it is clear that in 1895 Paterson wrote down words to the song at Dagworth station in central Queensland—or in the nearby township of Winton—or in both places. Sidney May's *Story of Waltzing Matilda* gives the least unsatisfactory published account of the proceedings.

Yet Paterson wrote a great many other verses. Why has this ballad alone become so popular that many foreigners and some Australians

think it our national anthem? The song had no official encouragement until World War II when it had already forced its way into popular favour. Obviously there must have been something in it corresponding with, and appealing to, a very deeply felt part of the Australian national tradition. Since there are plenty of other catchy tunes it is fair to conclude that the appeal lies mainly in the sentiment or narrative. Even though most of us now live in the coastal cities, we like to think we still have the qualities attributed to the rough and ready bushmen who pioneered the inland: and the first of these bush workers were convicts or ex-convicts.

Few things are more improbable, either now or when Paterson was holidaying in Queensland sixty years ago, than that a swagman, about to be arrested for sheep-stealing, should commit suicide. But there was a time when it could have happened. Speaking of the 1830's "Alexander Harris" wrote:

At by far the greater proportion of sheep stations in the colony the practice of feloniously killing the owner's sheep goes on to a greater or less extent: and plenty of owners know it and wink at it; others do not, but would prosecute and transport the men if they could adduce proof of it. Those who connive at it reason thus: "Well, the men must be fed and so must the dogs, or the work cannot be done; and it is a bad precedent to give them as much meat as they require, because that will lead to a universal and irresistible custom. I had better let them take it, and seem not to know anything about it."

"Waltzing Matilda" commemorates the fact that the practice of sheep-stealing did grow into a "universal and irresistible" outback custom. It also preserves a folk memory of hatred for those squatters who had men re-transported for stealing food in a land of abundance, where this crime at least should have been unnecessary.

We may suspect then that "Waltzing Matilda's" unique popularity stems from its use of the folk tradition embodied in the "Wild Colonial Boy" and so many other old bush songs. In these, robbery of "those wealthy squatters" is almost always regarded as a natural and noble act.

But how did "the Banjo" come to write the ballad? In his *Legend of the Nineties* Vance Palmer points out that although, as a citizen, Paterson was socially and politically rather conservative, as an artist he reflected very much of the popular folk outlook of his time, which was anything but conservative. "Waltzing Matilda" illustrates the force of this statement more clearly than anything else Paterson ever wrote. A detailed study of the song suggests that it may even be derived directly from an earlier anonymous ballad.

First, it has a peculiar lilting rhythm which demands to be sung, while most of Paterson's verses such, for example, as "The Man from Snowy River", call rather for declamation. Second, the verses depend for much of their effect on the use of the incremental refrain, a device which though not necessary to folk ballads, is characteristic of them. Paterson uses the incremental refrain elsewhere but only once, in "A Bushman's Song",* in anything like such a subtly varied way. But more significant is the theme of the song. As we have seen, the note of social protest is basic in the folk ballads as it is in Lawson, Furphy and much other and later Australian literary work, but except in "Waltzing Matilda" and "A Bushman's Song", it is conspicuously absent from most of Paterson's published verse. For him all bushmen, as such, are noble and romantic, or at least appealing figures. The villains are city people—unemployed on the Domain, or absentee graziers who live upon the work of bushmen without sharing any of their hardships. When Salt Bush Bill, the bullocky, fights with the squatter's minions for grass to feed his beasts, the story is told humorously and there is no real bitterness in the quarrel. Yet the jolly swagman's defiance of the squatter and the troopers is just as bitter—in just the same off-handedly laconic way—as was the defiance of Bold Jack Donahoe or the Wild Colonial Boy.

There would be nothing peculiar about all this if we suppose that Paterson based "Waltzing Matilda" on an old bush ballad. Fifty years ago it was not uncommon for *Bulletin* writers and others to publish as their own work a tidied-up version of an anonymous folk song. In the *Bulletin* of 2nd March 1916, for instance, appeared Louis Esson's stilted but correct version of an old bush rhyme known as "Three Little Johnny Cakes". Bobby Burns and others provide respectable or at least, in Australian terms, ancient precedents for the practice; and with Paterson there can be no question of conscious plagiarism. All who knew him agree that he was a man of exceptional integrity.

In 1895 Paterson was still a young man, and to judge from May's account of his stay at Dagworth station, it would have been natural for him to wish to impress the Macpherson girls and a Miss Riley who were there. One evening, May writes, Christina Macpherson was strumming the now well-known air on an autoharp when the poet, "inspired by the rhythm of the tune . . . forthwith got an old exercise book . . . [and] wrote the now famous words." The tune played by Miss Macpherson, May says, was that of a Scottish air

* There is some evidence for thinking that this song also may possibly have been based on an earlier folk ballad.

known as "Craigielea", but neither she, Paterson, nor anyone else present, had ever heard the *words* of this song. In any case the words of "Craigielea" are nothing like those of "Waltzing Matilda". The first stanza and the chorus go like this:

*The broom, the brier, the birken bush,
Bloom bonny o'er thy flow'ry lea;
And a' the sweets that aye can wish
Frae nature's hand are strewed on thee.*

*Thou bonny wood of Craigielea,
Thou bonny wood of Craigielea,
Near thee I've spent life's early day,
And won my Mary's heart in thee.*

However, "Craigielea" was not the only song that had ever been sung to the air played by Miss Macpherson. There is also an old English song called "The Bold Fusilier", which dates back to the time of Marlborough's wars. The first stanza and the chorus went like this:

*A gay fusilier was marching down through Rochester,
Bound for the wars in the Low Country,
And he cried as he tramped through the dear streets of Rochester—
"Who'll be a sojer for Marlbro' with me?*

*"Who'll be a sojer, who'll be a sojer,
Who'll be a sojer for Marlbro' with me?"
And he cried as he tramped through the dear streets of
Rochester,
"Who'll be a sojer for Marlbro' with me?"*

At first sight it seems hard to believe that the words, and indeed the existence, of this song were completely unknown to Paterson and to all the other people on the station. But again, if we posit the existence of an old bush song closely parodied on "The Bold Fusilier", it would be less difficult to explain the amazingly close parallelism.

It was quite common for Australian folk ballads to be descended in this way from older British songs. For instance there is a very popular bush ballad, surviving in many different versions, and known as variously "The Banks of the Condamine" or "The Banks of Riverine". In it a shearer, or horse-breaker, or other pastoral worker has difficulty in persuading his sweetheart that she must not accompany

him to his work on the distant station. The version printed in Vance Palmer's *Old Australian Bush Ballads* begins like this:

*Oh, hark the dogs are barking, love, I can no longer stay,
The men are all gone mustering and it is nearly day.
And I must off by the morning light before the sun doth shine,
To meet the Sydney shearers on the banks of the Condamine.*

*Oh, Willie, dearest Willie, I'll go along with you,
I'll cut off all my auburn fringe and be a shearer too.
I'll cook and count your tally, love, while ringer-O you shine,
And I'll wash your greasy moleskins on the banks of the Condamine.*

It is clear enough that this Australian song was derived from an older English street ballad, one version of which was put out during the Napoleonic Wars by Jemmy Catnach's *Seven Dials Press*. The ancestral English song goes in part:

*Hark! I hear the drums a-beating—no longer can I stay,
I hear the trumpets sounding, my love I must away,
We are ordered from Portsmouth many a long mile,
For to join the British soldiers on the banks of the Nile.*

*Willie, dearest Willie, don't leave me here to mourn,
You'll make me curse and rue the day that ever I was born.
For the parting of my own true love is parting of my life,
So stay at home dear Willie, and I will be your wife.*

*I will cut off my yellow locks and go along with you,
I will dress myself in velveteens and go see Egypt too,
I will fight or bear your banner while kind fortune seems to smile,
And we'll comfort one another on the banks of the Nile.*

It seems very likely that "The Banks of the Nile" was connected in its turn with "High Germany", an earlier English ballad dating, like "The Bold Fusilier", from the time of Marlborough. Here are two specimen stanzas from "High Germany":

*O Polly dear, O Polly, the rout has now begun,
And we must march away at the beating of the drum.
Go dress yourself in all your best and come along with me,
I'll take you to the cruel wars in High Germany.*

*O Harry, dear Harry, you mind what I say,
My feet are so tender I cannot march away.
And besides, my dearest Harry, though I'm in love with thee,
I'm not fit for cruel wars in High Germany.*

All this, of course, does not prove that the gay fusilier who marched down through Rochester was translated by a series of folk singers into the jolly swagman who camped by a billabong. It proves only that there would have been nothing inherently improbable in the process.

Slight corroborative evidence is provided by an old ballad-singer from the Riverina (Jack Lee), who assured me that he sang a version of "Waltzing Matilda" which was known by bushmen, though it was not by any means as popular as it later became, in the late 1880's, years before Paterson wrote his version in Queensland. And I have a series of letters from the late E. J. Brady, who knew a ballad from a bath-tub, to the same effect. He wrote in 1951:

The tune is an old British Military March said to have been written in Marlborough's time. I heard the words of this Australian version sung to it when I was a boy.

Brady was born in 1869 so that his boyhood was long over when Paterson was staying at Dagworth in 1895. Another letter of Brady's reads in part:

The version of "Waltzing Matilda" that I heard sung in the bush lang syne was the same, or nearly, as the popular song of today, and not at all like the words quoted in yours of 14th from Banjo's collection. (The first verse particularly). Can't you see that they are out of tone and Paterson's own interpretation?

Here Brady touches on another mystery. Although the columns of the *Bulletin* were open to Paterson from 1889 onwards, and although his first book of selected verse was published in 1895, "Waltzing Matilda" was not published until 1903, eight years after he wrote it. He later said that he sold the verses in that year to Angus and Robertson Ltd., with what he called "a lot of old junk". The phrase suggests the possibility that "Waltzing Matilda" may have been included in the parcel inadvertently. A few months later the verses were published, with sheet music arranged by Marie Cowan, as an advertisement for "Billy Tea". It is possible, in the circumstances, that the "Billy Tea" publication of the song and a subsequent one with music in *The Australasian Students' Song Book* (1911), were arranged without very careful prior consultation with the

author. At any rate for all these years Paterson did not include the poem in any of his popular collections of published verse. Then twenty-two years after it had been written, in 1917, while Paterson was in charge of an A.I.F. Remount Depot in Egypt, Angus and Robertson published a pocket edition of *Saltbush Bill J.P., and Other Verses*, which contained at last the now famous song, or at least a version of it.

Presumably this text is the one which Paterson regarded as final and his own. It was reprinted in all subsequent editions of *Saltbush Bill J.P.*, and in all editions of Paterson's *Collected Poems*, without alteration, except that from 1923 onwards the single word "put" was changed to "stowed", in the phrase "stowed him away in his tucker-bag". And perhaps the most extraordinary part of the whole tale is that this presumptively official version, which Paterson left unaltered right up till his death in 1941, is quite different in every line except for the single constant line of the chorus, "Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?" from what may be termed the unofficial "Billy Tea" version of 1903. This early version is the one which we all know and it is very much better诗ically as Paterson himself must certainly have realised, than the one he chose to leave to posterity above his signature. For instance, the last stanza of the popular version goes:

*Up jumped the swagman and sprang into the billabong,
"You'll never catch me alive," said he;
And his ghost may be heard as you pass by that billabong,
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!"*

In any edition of Paterson's *Collected Poems* one reads lines which, by comparison, are extremely banal and inept:

*But the swagman, he up and he jumped in the waterhole,
Drowning himself by the coolabah tree,
And his ghost may be heard as it sings in the billabong,
"Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?"*

The facts outlined prove nothing conclusively, but they suggest the probability that there was a folk version of "Waltzing Matilda" current in the outback during the 1870's and 1880's. If there was, Paterson may well have heard it once or twice during his boyhood on the Monaro Tableland, and retained it shadowily in his subconscious mind. When, as a young man of twenty-six, he heard the tune again, he would have been reminded of the forgotten bush

ballad. In writing down the words, after the lapse of so many years, he might well have been uncertain how much he remembered and how much he improvised on the spot but, being an honest man, he took no steps to publish the song as his own. This would not be inconsistent with his having allowed the young ladies at the station to believe, for the occasion, that the poem was entirely his. When twenty-two years later it was published, by those who had purchased it, in a book of his verse, he possibly took steps to see that it was in a form as different as possible from what he had by then remembered of the words of the folk ballad.

I hope this hypothetical story of "Waltzing Matilda" will not be construed as adverse criticism of Paterson. If there is anything in it he deserves, at the very least, in the words of Dal Stivens, all "the credit due to an editor of genius". If there was a folk version of "Waltzing Matilda", it would almost certainly have been lost without trace like so many more of our folk songs, if he had not taken it up.

I hope too I have not appeared to suggest that one has only to scratch an Australian to find a convict. What this particular story of "Waltzing Matilda" does suggest is that our popular national tradition owes a great deal, not to the convicts as they were upon disembarkation at Port Jackson, but to the best of them as they were years later when freedom and outback conditions had worked a sea-change, or rather a land-change, in their outlook. These men who chose the strangeness, the hardships, the independence, and the mateship of bush life were once known as "old hands". The term was applied at first to ex-convicts and then to hard-bitten old bushmen generally, whether they had once been "government men" or not. In every country and age there is a great difference between men as they are, and men as they like to think they are. In this latter respect "Waltzing Matilda" is one of a great many straws in the wind which show, perhaps, that if you scratch an Australian you will find an old hand.

Of course there are a few rather rigid patriots who repudiate this heritage. Some have generously offered to write verses of their own to replace "Waltzing Matilda" which, they feel, lacks decorum. "Let's face it," as one said, "it glorifies a thief and that's hardly the spirit of Australia." Well, perhaps the reformers are right, but those whom Goebbels so felicitously dubbed the "Twenty Thousand Thieves of Tobruk" were able to face the appalling thought with reasonable equanimity.

It is usually assumed that inherited attitudes exert less influence

in a young country like ours than in an old one, and that without a distinctive national tradition writers are at a disadvantage in giving form and direction to their work. Because they sensed this lack sixty years ago Paterson and other writers wrought mightily to create a native tradition. Naturally they sought, more or less consciously, those aspects of Australian life which differed most strikingly from manners and mores in Britain; and inevitably they found them in the outback. Thus the old hand or "noble bushman" became the symbol and vehicle of the discovered national *mystique*. Every tradition embodies both negative and positive elements. In his cultural swag the old hand carries delusions of racial grandeur as well as mateship; but most Australians seem well satisfied that, on the whole, the tradition is a good and democratic one. One of the functions of the writer, however, is to create traditions as the men of the nineties did, or at least to modify and develop them. Generally speaking, Australian poets seem to be doing this more successfully than our prose writers. Today more Australians than ever before, proportionately and absolutely, are city-dwellers. Life here is very much more intimately affected by overseas events and ideas than it was when the portrait of the "noble bushman" was hardening into a stereotype. We surely have less need now to convince ourselves of difference, of the fact of our nationality, than we did in 1895. Yet the "outback" tradition, unmodified or insufficiently modified by subsequent events, still seems to fascinate too many novelists and short story writers. The fascination may become morbid, if not fatal, when it so dominates the creative writer's imagination as to make him *more* interested in tracing the lineaments of the "noble bushman" in contemporary society than he is in discovering what people are like now.

Rec'd: No.
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John Morrison

The Incense Burner

IT was a one-way trip. I paid off in London in the middle of winter with twenty pounds in cash, a wrist-watch worth £15 and a good kit of clothes, half on my back and half in a suit-case. And a fair bit of experience for my nineteen years.

I put up at somebody's "Temperance Hotel" near King's Cross Station because I was sick of the drunken orgies that had marked every port of call coming over from Australia, and was knocked up at eleven o'clock the first night by a housemaid innocently armed with dust-pan and empty bucket who asked me if there was anything I wanted. There wasn't. That also was something I'd got sick of on the way over.

At the end of a fortnight I had added something to my experience and was down to thirty shillings, a pawn-ticket in place of the watch, and the suit-case, still with contents. So I left the hotel, took a room in a seamen's lodging-house down near the East India Docks, and began to look for a ship home.

I wasn't long in finding out that I'd left my gallop a bit late. In 1929 a seaman looking for a ship out of London needed something better than thirty shillings and a brand-new discharge book. I had only one entry in my book, and second engineers and shipping officials weren't impressed. Thousands of good men were haunting the docks every day. Real seamen, with lifetimes of experience behind them, and rubbed old books to prove it. I came to the conclusion after a few days that my book was a handicap more than a help. I'd had enough of London. I wanted a ship bound for Australia and nowhere else. And my book made it all too clear. Second engineers and second mates used to flick it open, drop the corners of their lips, and pass it back to me with dry smiles. I had it written all over me—England to Australia. They wanted men for a round voyage, not homesick Australians who would skin out at the first port touched.

I lasted two weeks: ten shillings a week for my room, and ten
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shillings the fortnight for food. I did it by getting in sweet with a ship's cook, a Melbourne man, on one of the "Bay" ships which was taking in a big cargo. I got dinner out of the black pan for ten days running. A few breakfasts, too, until he told me not to make it too hot.

They were good feeds, but there weren't enough of them. I was only nineteen years of age, as fit as they come, and walking up to fifteen miles every day. I got steadily hungrier. There were days when I could have eaten my landlady. She was a skinny sad-looking woman with bulging fish's eyes and a rat-trap mouth. I thought she was the toughest thing I'd ever met in my life. I was out all day every day, and on the rare occasions when I saw her she didn't seem to care whether she spoke to me or not. I used to turn in fairly early and lie reading, and until a late hour every night I could hear the thumping of a smoothing-iron in the kitchen at the far end of the passage. She was a widow, and with only one other lodger, a pensioner, had to support herself by taking in washing. It was a dark, silent, dismal hole of a place, smelling perpetually of wet clothes and yellow soap.

I saw the other lodger only once, a stooping old man in soft hat and long overcoat, vanishing into his room as I came in one night. I heard him often enough though. Too often. He had one of those deep rumbling coughs that seem to come all the way up from the region of the stomach. He would go for minutes on end without stopping. He used to wake me up every night. Sometimes I thought he was going to suffocate.

His name was Burroughs—"old Burroughs" to Mrs. Hall. I knew nothing about him—or about Mrs. Hall either, if it came to it—until my last day in the house. I had 7½d. left, and the rent of my room was due that night. It was a cold raw day with skies you could reach up and touch, and a threat of snow. In the morning I did the usual round of the docks, missed out on a last feed on the Bay ship, and went back to Finch Street to tell Mrs. Hall I was leaving. I'd had to recognise the fact that I was well and truly "on the beach"; that there was nothing for it now but the Salvation Army "Elevator", an institution about which I had heard plenty in the past two weeks.

I was to learn that day that my landlady's forbidding manner was nothing more than a front deliberately built up over years of contact with tough London seamen. She had a heart of gold, but like a lot of other good people had become afraid to let the world see it.

She talked to me at the kitchen door, and as I told her what I was going to do she stared past me down the short passage with

her grim little mouth tightly shut and a bitter expression on her dour face. I felt I was telling her an old and familiar and hated story. She must have seen a lot of defeated men in her time. Behind her was a table piled with washing, two or three ramshackle chairs, a linoleum with great holes rubbed in it, and a hot stove with several irons standing at one side.

"It's a damned shame, that's what it is," she burst out with a vehemence that startled me. "Good, clean, respectable young men walking the streets." She sniffed, and tossed her head. For a moment I thought she was going to cry. Instead she asked me in for a cup of coffee. I was just going to make one, she said. It'll warm you up.

It was the worst coffee I'd ever tasted; half a teaspoonful of cheap essence out of a bottle, mixed with boiling water; and a slice of bread to eat with it. Stale bread thinly spread with greasy margarine. But I was cold and hungry, and friendly words went with it. God help her! It was all the hospitality she could offer me. One glance around that wretched room convinced me that I had been living better than she.

I told her I didn't want to take any good clothes into the hostel with me, and asked if I could leave my suit-case with her until my luck turned.

"You can leave anything you like. Only no responsibility, mind you." She went on to tell me that she never knew from one day to another who she was going to have under her roof. In the middle of it there came a muffled sound of coughing from along the passage. She stopped to listen, holding her breath and pulling a face as if she were actually experiencing some of the old man's distress.

"I'm not saying anything about *him*. He's all right. I can go out and leave anything around. Poor old soul! Many's the time I give him a cup of coffee, and I'll swear to God it's the only thing that passes his lips from morn till night. Where he gets to when he goes out . . ."

"Old people . . ."

"Don't you worry about that. He's old enough, but not as old as he looks. He was in the war. He's a sick man, that's what's wrong with him. One of these days I'll wake up and find I've got a corpse on my hands. You just ought to be here when he gets one of his foreign parcels."

"Foreign parcels?"

Mrs. Hall finished her coffee, got up, and began sorting the things on the table.

"Don't ask me where he comes from. He never tells me anything, and I never stick my nose into another body's business. But

he's got somebody somewhere that hasn't forgotten him. Every month he gets this parcel. Not much—a pair of underpants or socks, or a muffler—just bits of things. And a little bundle of dry leaves, herbs for his cough, I suppose. My God, you just ought to smell them! He burns them in a bit of a tin pan he's got. They stink the house out. And there he sits and just sucks it in. It's beyond me how he can put up with it. I've always got to get out till he's finished."

Mrs. Hall sniffed and blew, as if the smell of the herbs from the foreign parcel were in her nostrils even then.

"He's been here nearly twelve months, and if it wasn't for that I wouldn't care if he stopped for twelve years. He never bothers nobody, and he keeps his room like a new pin. I've never yet seen him with drink in, and that's a change from some of them I get here, you mark my words. I know *you're* not the drinking kind, otherwise you wouldn't have been asked in here."

Poor Mrs. Hall!

She wished me good luck and promised to keep my suit-case in her own room until I came back for it.

Travelling light, I walked all the way to the Salvation Army headquarters in Middlesex Street, stated my case to a "soldier" just inside the door, and was sent over to an elderly grey-headed "officer" seated at a desk piled with papers. All this happened a long time ago, and many of the details are hazy, but I'm left with an impression of newness, of spacious floors, of pleasant faces, of friendly efficiency.

The officer asked me what it was I wanted the Army to do for me. I told him.

"I'm an Australian. I worked my way over as a coal trimmer. I wanted to see London; you know how it is. Now I'm broke. I'm looking for a passage home. I've got to find somewhere to live while I look for a ship."

"Where have you been living?"

Nothing inquisitorial about his manner. He was taking stock of me all the time. I had no reason to deceive him, but I felt it would be a waste of time anyway, that I was dealing with a man full of experience.

"In lodgings down at Custom House near the East India Docks. I've had to get out, though; I haven't a shilling left."

"You didn't jump your ship, did you?"

Only a man who knew sailors would have asked me that.

"No, I've got a clean book." My hand went to my pocket, but he stopped me with a gesture.

"It isn't necessary for me to pry into your affairs, my boy. You

understand that if you go into the Elevator you won't have much time to look for a ship?"

"I know I'll have to work, but that's all right. I could get some time off now and then, couldn't I?"

"Yes, as long as you did your task. But that's the responsibility of the Commandant down there." He reached out and picked a form off a little pile at his side. "I'll give you a note to take down. I can't promise he'll have room for you, but it's worth while trying. What's your name?"

"Thomas Blair."

"Do you know where Old Street is?"

They did take me in, and for a little over three weeks I earned food and lodging by sorting waste string at the establishment known as the "Elevator", down in Spitalfields.

It was the strangest three weeks I have ever experienced, and the most generally hopeless company of men I was ever mixed up with. There were about forty of us, of whom perhaps twenty were professional tramps "wintering in". Of the others, fellows in circumstances more or less similar to my own, I got an impression that only a few were still trying to get their heads above water again. Conversation was not primarily around the prospect of finding employment, as I expected it to be, but around the petty incidents of the day, the evening's bill of fare, a certain current murder trial, and every triviality of hostel administration that they could think up. At the time I was thoroughly contemptuous of it all, but I understand better now. Those men had had a lot more of London than I had. I was still fresh to the struggle. . . .

We worked nine hours a day; 7.30 in the morning until 5.30 in the evening, with an hour off for dinner.

I was never able to find out why they called the place the "Elevator", unless because it was intended as an elevator of fallen men. That's likely enough, but I'm not sure that it worked out in practice. I'm not questioning the good faith of the Salvation Army officers charged with its administration, but the prevailing atmosphere was far from elevating. On the first morning a short conversation with my immediate bench-mate served to reveal in a flash the spirit permeating the entire establishment.

"Been in before?" he asked me.

"No."

"Stopping long?"

"No longer than I can help."

"That might be longer than you think, chum. Y'ought to try to get on the staff. It's a sitter if they don't know you."

"What staff?"

"Here, and up at the Hostel. Sweeping out, making beds, cooking and serving. They're all chaps that come in off the streets, like you. Not much money in it, but everything's turned on free. All you got to do is get saved."

"Saved?"

"Go out to the penitent form at one of the prayer meetings. Give your heart to Jesus...."

And that was it. It was a home for the destitute, largely run by the destitute themselves. And if you weren't particularly anxious to move on, and were sufficiently unscrupulous, you could be one of the running brigade. And the way to muscle into the running brigade was simply to get saved. I discovered that some of the old hands got saved every year as soon as the winter winds began to blow and the roads frosted up.

All the charge-hands at the Elevator were such brands clutched from the burning, and a more foxy-looking crowd I never set eyes on. They were on a sweet thing, and in their anxiety to stick to it they took care that precious little of the spirit of Salvation Army benevolence got beyond the corner of the building where the Commandant had his little office. Beggars-on-horseback, they ran the place with much of the efficiency, and even less of the humanity, of an ordinary factory.

The Elevator was simply a depot for the collecting and sorting and re-packing of waste paper, rags, and string. All day long motor-trucks, horse-drawn lorries, and handcarts kept coming in heaped with salvage which was unloaded and dragged to various parts of the great floor for sorting out.

I was put on to the string bench, and each morning was given a one-cwt. bag of odds and ends of string which I had to roughly disentangle and distribute among a row of boxes marked "cotton", "sessile", etc. I forgot the other names.

That was my task for the day, the price I paid for three meals and a bed to sleep in at night. Anything I did over and above that was paid for, if I remember correctly, at the rate of 1s. 3d. per cwt. In the three weeks I was there I earned just enough cash to keep me in cigarettes, carefully rationed, and nothing more. And there was no getting out of it if I wanted those three meals and the bed. I tried, on the very first day—seizing a moment when I thought nobody was looking to ram a double handful of unsorted string into the sessile

box. But one of the Foxes saw me from a distant part of the floor, and made me drag it out again under threat of instant expulsion.

We didn't live at the Elevator. An old shop next door had been converted into a dining-room, and every day at 12 o'clock we trooped in and received dinners served from hot-boxes brought down from some army cook-house. At the end of the day's work each man was given three tickets on the Hostel in Old Street a mile or so away, one for tea, one for bed, and one for breakfast next morning.

The Old Street Hostel was one of the biggest in London, and was run on much the same lines as the Elevator. There was a wash-house with neither soap nor towels, dormitories—barrack-like, but quite clean—and a spacious dining-room where we could sit for the rest of the evening after eating. I understood that most of the food—"leftovers" of some kind or other—was donated or bought cheaply from hotels, cafés, shops, and bakehouses. But it was priced so low that a man could eat plenty; it was dished up with every appearance of cleanliness, and I can't say I ever found it anything but appetising. Meal tickets were valued at 1s. 3d., and we could choose what we liked from the bill of fare stuck up at the end of the serving counter: slice of bread and margarine 1d., pot of tea or coffee 1d., soup 2d., roast beef or mutton 3d., kippers 1d. each, vegetables 2d., apple tart 3d. . . .

All a bit primitive, if you like, but I had a two weeks' hunger to work off, and they were the most enjoyable meals I ever had in my life. Food was, indeed, the only thing that made life worth living just then. I would open my eyes every morning thinking of breakfast, and when it was over I'd grit my teeth and stagger through the next five hours sustained only by thoughts of dinner. And when that was over there came thoughts of tea.

One red-letter day I cashed two tea tickets. My neighbour on the string bench got on to something better for that evening, and gave me his. When I lined up at the counter the second time the Fox in the white apron gave me a cold stare.

"What's this? I've served you once."

"Don't be funny," I replied. "How many tickets d'you think we get?"

Still staring, he became positive, threw the ticket into the tray, and turned to the man next in line, dismissing me with a curt: "Move on, chum, you've had it."

He should have known better, because there are two things for which a man is always prepared to fight, and food is one of them. I reached out and grabbed his wrist.

"Come up with it, mister! I'm in the Elevator. I worked for that ticket. . . ."

He shook himself free, but I must have looked as savage as I felt, because he served me without further argument.

I was like that all the time, hostile on the whole infernal world and ready to take it out on anybody. Each week I got leave for half a day and went the familiar round of the docks, but a ship seemed as far off as ever. I hated London as I'd never hated any place before, began to lose hope, and fell into a mood of gloomy self-pity that made me impatient and contemptuous of everybody around me. Those men didn't talk much about their private affairs, and with the egotism and intolerance of youth I assumed that none of their troubles were as great as mine. A man with youth, good health, and no responsibilities, should find any tussle an exhilarating adventure, but many of us don't believe that until youth is past. I used to try to cheer myself up by contrasting my circumstances with those of old Burroughs coughing his life away down in the hovel in Finch Street, but that only made matters worse. Visions of the old man creeping along the dark passage, or crouched over his periodical burning of the herbs, positively frightened me. For he also had had youth, and somewhere in the past there had been a beginning to the road that led to Finch Street, and that assuredly would go from there nowhere but to the grave.

The Hostel was full of them, shivering watery-eyed old men who wandered the streets all day, stumbling in only at nightfall to stand for a long time studying the bill of fare with a few miserable coppers clutched in their stiff fingers. Nobody took any notice of them. No doubt they would have envied old Burroughs, for nobody ever sent *them* parcels with socks and mufflers in them. All the same, they moved me to fear more than to pity, for were they not life-members of a fraternity of which I had just become a novice?

And if during the day all my dreams were of food, then at night-time all my dreams were of home. The coughings of old Burroughs had nothing on the wheezings and mutterings of that refuge of lost men. Sleep came to me slowly, and was often broken, and in wakeful moments I would lie with wide eyes and tight lips, deliberately torturing myself with nostalgic longings.

Some building close by had a clock that chimed the hours, and whenever I heard it I would think carefully and call up a scene in Australia that I knew was true and exact of that very minute.

At midnight I would say to myself: It's ten o'clock in the morning in Melbourne, and the wharfies coming away from the pick-up are

crowding the trams on the Hotham corner, or dropping in for a quick one before going home for a few chores and lunch. And there's a white sky and a smell of dust, and trembling pavements which by noon will be hot enough to fry eggs on. And down at St. Kilda beach lazy little waves are lapping in, and some of the Fortunate Ones are crossing the Promenade from the big apartment houses and spreading their towels on the sand for a brown-off. And even though it's a week-day the Point Nepean Highway down the Peninsula is already lively with cars speeding to the bush and more distant beaches. And there's a place down there in the heath country where my mates and I used to go rabbiting on Sunday afternoons. And the big loose-limbed manna gum where we found the parrot's nest is still there, its thin foliage hard and sharp against the sky in that way that always reminded me of the figures on a Japanese willow-pattern plate. And somewhere on the scrubby slope that runs up to the road a wallaby sits with drooping forefeet and pricked ears. And the air is full of the scent of paper-barks down in the swamp, and of the whistlings and twitterings of grey thrushes, honeyeaters, and blue wrens. And every now and then, on the breath-like puff of a breeze that comes out of the north, there is another smell that I know well, and over in a saddle of the distant Dandenongs a column of smoke reveals where the bushfire is burning . . .

For three weeks.

Then, suddenly, it was all over.

One morning at breakfast-time I got talking with a stranger who turned out to be a seaman. Within a few minutes he knew what I was looking for.

"Why don't you give the *Tairoa* a go?" he asked me. "Ever done a trip as a steward?"

"No. What about the *Tairoa*?"

"She's leaving for Australia today, and they were signing on single-trippers yesterday. A lot of the New Zealand Company's packets do it. They go out stuffed with emigrants in the 'tween-decks. At the other end they dismantle the accommodation and fill up with cargo for home. They only want most of the stewards one way."

"How is it I've never heard about this? I've walked those docks . . ."

"Well, you wouldn't be looking for second stewards with that book, would you? Anyway, the shore superintendent's the chap you want to see. He's got an office down at the East India somewhere."

You'll have to look lively if you want to try the *Tairoa*—she's up for noon. . . ."

She's up for noon! Oh, the friendly, intimate, vivid jargon of the sea! There was a promise in the familiar phrase that raised my excitement to fever-heat. I never met that seaman again but I'll love him till the day I die.

It took me two hours to find the shore superintendent, and less than five minutes to get the ship. He was a busy man all right. I was at his office at half-past eight, but they told me he had just left for a certain ship, and it was half-past ten before I caught up with him. I can't, at this distance of time, trace my wanderings in those two hours, but I must have visited at least six vessels at widely separated berths, always just a few minutes behind him. However, I was after something that drew me on like the Holy Grail, and I nailed him at last just as he was about to get into his car. I knew I was on the right track as soon as he stopped to listen to me.

"We don't want trimmers," he said after a glance at my book. "We want stewards."

"That's all right with me," I replied. "I'm after a passage. I'll sign as a steward. I've worked in hotels."

He passed the book back, taking me in from head to feet.

"Where's your gear?"

I could hardly speak for excitement.

"Up in my room in Custom House."

"You'd have to be aboard by twelve o'clock."

"I'll do that easy. Where's she lying?"

He told me. "Give me your name," he said as he pulled out a pocket-book. "Report to the second steward and give him this note."

She's up for noon . . .

Finch Street was two miles away, but I'll swear I made it in twenty minutes. There was plenty of time, but I had it in mind there was a suit-case to carry on the return trip, and I was taking no chances. It was a cold foggy morning, but I was sweating from the long chase and the fever of success. The grey buildings, and the shrouded figures that passed me on the pavement, were but images seen through the enchanted mists of fairyland. All the world had become beautiful, and I strode along puffed with triumph and springing on my toes with physical well-being. I told myself that youth and strength and pertinacity had to prevail in the long run. You couldn't keep a good man down. Not when he had something to struggle for. Those men of the Hostel lacked the spur—inspiration—a vision . . .

No more Elevator. Without a doubt I wore a silly smile, because

more than once I caught a curious glance directed at me by a passer-by. Perhaps my lips were moving too, because the magical phrase "she's up for noon" rang in my head until it took on the tune of a certain military march. I could have danced to it, shouted it aloud.

She's up for noon!

I remembered afterwards holding back to let an ambulance pass me as I was about to cross into Finch Street, but the fact that it was an ambulance didn't register at the time—only that it was a car of some kind, and in a hurry.

But I did observe instantly the women out at their doors all along both sides, and the little group of gossipers on the front of my old lodgings.

I thought first of Mrs. Hall, then of old Burroughs. But the humour of pitiless detachment was still on me, and I hardly quickened my pace. I'd come back for a suit-case, that was all, and in a few minutes these people . . .

They all turned to watch me as I came up. I saw Mrs. Hall in the doorway, her popping eyes red with weeping.

"It's the old man, sailor. They've just took him off. The poor old soul . . ."

Some of the arrogance left me. I wasn't interested in old Burroughs, but this woman had given me a cup of coffee and a few words of sympathy when I needed them most. The other women stood aside, and I moved into the passage, taking the landlady by the elbow and drawing her in after me. Something tickled my nostrils, but all my attention was on something else.

"He's an old man, you know, Mrs. Hall. What happened?"

"They think it's a stroke." She began to weep again, dabbing her eyes with the lifted end of her tattered apron. "God help him! He tried to talk to me. He got one of them parcels this morning, them herbs. He's been sitting there—you got a ship, sailor?"

She could think of me, too.

"Yes, I'm going aboard in an hour. Where've they taken him?"
But I didn't hear her reply.

Because that something which had been tickling my nostrils got right inside, and I lifted my head like a parched bullock scenting water, and stared along the passage, and sniffed, and licked my lips—and drew in a mighty inhalation that filled my lungs and sent me dizzy with the sickness that had been eating into me for five mortal weeks. I seized Mrs. Hall with a violence that made her stare at me in sudden fright.

"Mrs. Hall! That smell—those 'herbs'—where did they come from?"

As if I didn't know!

"Sailor . . ."

Burning gum-leaves! Oh Shades of the Bush and smell of my home!

Pushing her from me, I was down the passage in two frenzied leaps and throwing open the door . . .

But nothing was left save the belongings of a lonely old man, a wisp of blue smoke rising from a tin set on an upturned box, and a Digger's hat hanging on a nail driven into the mantelpiece.



The Mirror

Jan Vermeer Speaks

Time that is always gone stays still
A moment in this quiet room.
Nothing exists but what we know,
The mirror gathers in the world,
Time and the world. And I shall hold
All summers in a stroke of gold.

Twilight, and one last fall of sun
That slants across the window-sill,
And, mirrored darkly in the glass
(Can paint attempt that unlit void?)
All night, oblivion, is stayed
Within the curtain's folded shade.

Upon the table bread and wine.
The earthen pitcher's perfect curve
Once spun upon the potter's wheel
Is pivot of the turning world,
Still centre where my peace abides,
Round moon that draws all restless tides.

There, it is done. The vision fades
And Time moves on. Oh you who praise
This tangled, broken web of paint,
I paint reflections in a glass:
Who look on truth with mortal sight
Are blinded in its blaze of light.

ROSEMARY DOBSON

Detail from an Annunciation by Crivelli

My sisters played beyond the doorway,
My mother bade me hush and go,
I did not think that any saw me
I went so still on tip of toe.

My sisters played beneath the olives,
They called like birds from tree to tree;
I climbed the stairs and through the archway
Looked where no one else could see.

My hair hung straight beneath my cap,
My dress hung down in fold on fold,
And when the painter filled it in
He edged it round with strokes of gold.

My mother thought I played without,
My sisters thought I stayed within,
Only the painter saw me hide
His brush held upwards to begin.

I saw the Dove, I saw the Lady
Cross her hands upon her breast,
I heard a music, and a shining
Came upon my eyes to rest.

I am twelve, but I was eight then:
No one listens when I tell
Least of all my little sisters
What I saw and what befell.

Look upon the painter's picture,
See, he shows you where I hid,
What I saw, and how I listened
You believe me that I did?

ROSEMARY DOBSON

The Wildwood

In desert waste, on thorny hill
Stalked the sublime, indifferent lion:
He bowed his head before the saint
Who set him on the path to Zion.

The centaur in a wooded place
Rooted and trembling, sniffed the air,
Saint Anthony before his cell
With lifted hands cast out his fear.

The stag who from the thicket leapt
With all the fury of the wild
Was by the holy hermit tamed;
The leopard lay down with the child.

The bear, the wolf, the fox subdued—
All these the painter showed, and more,
Then overturned his pots of paint
And threw his brushes on the floor.

Out in the thickets of the night,
The wildwood world of hate and greed,
Driven by lust, impelled by fear,
He had his will, he took his need.

Ah hasten, holy men, step down
From out the pictures' webs of paint,
Artists, no less than beasts and birds,
Have need of taming by the saint!

ROSEMARY DOBSON

The Birth

A wreath of flowers as cold as snow
Breaks out in bloom upon the night:
That tree is rooted in the dark,
It draws from dew its breath of life,
It feeds on frost, it hangs in air
And like a glittering branch of stars
Receives, gives forth, its breathing light.

Eight times it flowered in the dark,
Eight times my hand reached out to break
That icy wreath to bear away
Its pointed flowers beneath my heart.
Sharp are the pains and long the way
Down, down into the depths of night
Where one goes for another's sake.

Once more it flowers, once more I go
In dream at midnight to that tree,
I stretch my hand and break the branch
And hold it to my human heart.
Now, soft as petals of a rose
Those flowers unfold and grow to me—
I speak as of a mystery.

ROSEMARY DOBSON

Out of Winter

Darkness shaken by the wind; winter
Beating the tree of darkness gathers
The windfall stars, unnatural harvest,
Bright bitter fruit colder than water.

Out of darkness I ask for solace
The clean, the truthful lines of winter:
And Time has shaken my mind, reaping
The fruit of pain, the fruit of grieving.

I ask the anatomy of beginnings, landscapes
Bared to the bones of rocks and boulders,
The simple truths of early paintings—
Births, deaths, and belief in visions.

Water contents me and the sky at evening,
The promise of flowers in the air at noonday;
Schooled in the miracles of Fra Angelico
I await the Angel of the Annunciation.

Bare tree, bare mind swept clean of anguish
Accept simplicities, be patient,
Await the bird in the bough, the tremor
Of life in the veins, another springtime.

ROSEMARY DOBSON

The Tree

He watched them as they walked towards the tree,
 Through the green garden when the leaves stood still
 He saw his scarlet fruit hung tremulously:
 He whispered, "Eat it if you will."

Knowing as yet they had no will but his,
 Were as his hand, his foot, his braided hair,
 His own face mocked him from his own abyss:
 He whispered, "Eat it if you dare!"

Without him they could neither will nor dare;
 Courage and will yet slumbered in the fruit,
 Desire forbore, they still were unaware
 That doubt was set to feed the root.

God held his breath: If they should miss it now,
 Standing within the shadow of the tree.
 Always the I, never to know the Thou
 Imprisoned in my own eternity.

"Death sits within the fruit, you'll surely die!"
 He scarcely formed the word upon a breath;
 "O liberating seed! Eat, then, and I
 For this release will die your every death.

"Thus time shall be confounded till you come
 Full-circle to this garden where we stand,
 From the dark maze of knowledge, with the sum
 Of good and evil in your hand.

"Then you will shed the journey you have made,
 See millenniums fall about your feet,
 Behold the light that flares within each blade
 Of grass, the visible paraclete."

The harsh Word stirred the leaves, the fruit glowed red,
 Adam's foot struck against the root;
 He saw his naked doubt and raised his head:
 Eve stretched her hand and plucked the fruit.

The Old Wife's Tale

Summer, transpose your haunting themes
into a key that all can sing.

How soon will winter's gadfly air
dart through the empty streets to sting
those dancers from the crowded square,
to spear their hopes and spike their dreams.

When I was young I danced so long
the firework stars wheeled round and burst
and showered their fierce chromatic rain
about my feet so long rehearsed
in dancing that I felt no pain
but far outdanced the dancing throng

until, beside a glass, I turned
to fix my hair and smooth my lace.
Then terror had me by the throat—
a vacant, crazed old woman's face
stared from my own. One vibrant note
cracked folly's bowl. The music burned

one moment, then its prism tones
fused into silence. Dazed and halt
I called on Christ, kind nurse, to wean
my foolish lips from sweet to salt,
erase in mercy what had been,
and melt with ease my tortured bones.

Silence for answer. So I caught
a young man's hand. He smiled and said,
“God's old and foolish, we can steal
more than our share of heavenly bread.
Rest in my arms, and I'll reveal
in darkness the true mode of thought.”

I bit the core of pain, to find
this world's true sweetness on my lips.
The virtuoso senses priced
at nothing, in one vast eclipse.
A moving fingertip sufficed
to draw love's orbit through the mind.

Better than love, what name for this:
 our vanished childhood sealed in flesh,
 the restless energy of joy
 whipping a world still morning-fresh
 to hum new notes, a spinning toy.
 All sorrow mended in a kiss.

My children grew. Like wine I poured
 knowledge and skill, fought love's long war
 with trivial cares. My spirit gave
 a cry of hunger: "Grant me more
 than this bare sustenance, I crave
 some combat worthy of my sword."

Powerless to temper or withhold
 time's raining blows, I watched him break
 my cherished moulds and shape his own,
 give strangers back for children, take
 my husband, and I stood alone,
 a shepherd with an empty fold.

Now with divining age I seek
 the hidden seminal springs of peace,
 hold mercy's spiral to my ear,
 or stand in silence and release
 the falcon mind to hunt down fear.
 I stare at clouds until they break

in paradigms of truth, and spell
 my sentence at the sun's assize.
 My bone-bare, stark endurance frames
 terror for fools, but to the wise
 my winter-landscape face proclaims
 life's last, and death's first parable.

GWEN HARWOOD

Katharine Susannah Prichard

N'goola

STUMBLING and swaying, the old man climbed the sandy track. It wound through thin scrub and thorn bushes covering a low hillside.

Mary passed him as she came from work in the nearby township. The old man called after her. She stopped and he shambled wearily towards her. The bare toes with broken nails sticking out of shoes, thick with red dust, told her that he had come a long way.

"N'goola!" he cried. "D' y' know a girl called N'goola in the native camp, missus?"

"Never heard of her," Mary said and went on.

It was Saturday afternoon and she was in a hurry to get home. Her string bag, full of meat and vegetables for the week-end, slung her wiry figure to one side as she plodded with bare feet up the track, carrying her shoes. A woman of thirty-five or thereabouts, wearing a neatly made dress of floral cotton, she had met the old man's eyes with the beautiful brown eyes of an aboriginal, but her hair was brown, and there was a yellowish tinge in her skin.

The old man was a stranger, she guessed. A derelict from the remnants of tribes all over the country who wandered into the settlement of native huts on the far side of the hill. A place of refuge, it was, for the outcasts of his people, and hers—the men and women of mixed blood who were still regarded as aborigines.

Mary had little to do with the wild, gypsyish crew which gathered there, although she was friendly with most of the older men and women. She lived on the outskirts of the settlement. Her husband, a man of her own colour, often sneered at her for trying to live like a white woman: keeping her home clean and tidy and herself respectable, as she had been taught to in a mission school.

Her home was not far off: a humpy, squat and dark, built of rusted kerosene tins and old scraps of timber, with a roof through which the rain poured in winter. But the land where the humpy stood belonged to her. Mary prided herself on that. She had bought it

with money earned doing washing and scrubbing in the township: money hidden and saved for years. Her son was a big lad, nearly eighteen. She lived and worked now to get a house built on her land: a small wooden house with a roof of corrugated iron.

A few geraniums and tomato plants wilted in the dry sand of what she called her garden. Mary's eyes lingered on them lovingly before she opened the door and went into the one room of the humpy.

Vexed to find her husband had left scraps of food and unwashed dishes littering the table, she put down her shopping bag and cleared them away, lit a fire on the open hearth, swept the floor, washed the dishes, cut up the meat and vegetables she had bought to make a stew, and put them in a pot on the fire. Ted would be coming in soon for a meal, she expected, although often on a Saturday night he was too drunk to do more than sprawl on the bed and sleep until morning.

Her tidying done, Mary went to the door, wondering whether the old man she passed on the track had gone down into the settlement. She wished she had not been so sharp with him. Glancing back along the track, she saw that he had made himself a little fire on the brow of the hill. She could hear him singing to himself in a dreary, monotonous voice.

Why had he asked about a girl by her native name? No one would know that. Most of the girls in the settlement would not remember if they ever had a native name. They were all Jeans and Janeys, Kittys and Dulcies, these days.

"N'goola." Mary was disturbed by something vaguely familiar in the name. She seemed to have heard it before, but when and where she could not remember.

Sunset was searing the sky. Mary sat down on a box near the door, tired after her day's work. Her thoughts strayed over the many evenings she had sat like this watching the sun set and soothed by the quiet, despite a vile smell which filled the air, coming from the dilapidated building on the hilltop where the filth of the district accumulated for treatment.

Because of it, Mary reflected bitterly, a stretch of arid country was the only place, in all the hundreds of miles this side of the ranges, where people of the native race were permitted to meet and live together. Here on the low hillsides surrounding a depression which was a swamp in winter but dry and hard in summer, a score or so of families had built shacks like her own. For the most part, mere hovels of rusty tin and bagging, they looked like rotten mushrooms thrust up from the ground.

Mary could see a twist of smoke rising from some of them, and children running about the huts; toddlers quite naked, and other youngsters in coloured rags. Half a dozen women squatted beside a clump of bushes playing cards. Round the two-up ring on the flat, a crowd of men and women milled crazily, making their last bets before the light failed.

"N'goola! N'goola!"

The word was like a fly in Mary's brain. Hauntingly, irritatingly, it clung to her, making her feel uneasy, stirring confused memories. Who was she? Where had she come from? She had no idea—unless there was something in what an old woman had said when she was visiting sick natives in hospital. The old woman had been delirious and dying when Mary stood beside her.

"*Yienda* Port Hedland girl," she exclaimed. "*Bulyarrie*, same as me."

"How do you know?" Mary asked.

The old woman had mumbled a word or two about ants and a mark on her forehead. Afterwards, in the settlement, Mary was pleased to say that she came from Port Hedland and belonged to the *Bulyarrie* group in tribal relationship, but she never mentioned it to Ted, or any white people, the secret elation it gave her to think she belonged somewhere, and to somebody.

Dull red, like the ochre used in rock drawings, was burning out behind the rim of the hills. Dusk gathered and lights sparkled from huts on the hillside.

"N'goola! N'goola!"

Mary was startled to hear the old man singing in a southern dialect. She had learnt many words of it from Blind Nelly: hearing her talk, listening to her songs and stories about the birds and animals which were once men of the *nyoongar*.

*Little one, little one,
Little lost one,
Child of my dreaming,
Where are you?
Long and far has Gwelnit wandered,
Calling and searching.
Now his bones are weak,
His eyes are dim,
The end of the journey is near.*

Like that, it went, the weird crooning and wailing, on and on, over and over again. Mary listened intently as the old man droned away.

His voice was muffled, then it rose, crying so piercingly: "N'goola! N'goola!" that Mary jumped to her feet.

She walked quickly to where the old man was sitting beside his fire. He looked at her with dazed, bleary eyes when she stood before him in the firelight.

"Who is she, this N'goola?" she asked.

"My daughter."

The old man stared at her, his face heavy with the grief that had gone into his singing.

"Yienda?"

"Mary. I live with my husband, over there."

"Wongi woman?"

"Yaller-biddy."

The old man caught the rasp in her voice.

"N'goola, yaller-biddy," he murmured.

"Tell me about her." Mary sat down on the ground opposite to him. "*Bulyarrie*, me."

The old man nodded, deep lines in the worn leather of his face relaxing to her respect for tribal custom, as if it were a bond between them.

But she wanted no bond with this dirty old man, Mary told herself, in a quick revulsion of feeling. She had lived too long among white people to go back to aboriginal ways and ideas. Why had she mentioned her tribal group? Was it in case they might be in a forbidden relationship? To put him at his ease? Or on an impulse she could not restrain?

A more aloof dignity in the old man's bearing intimated that he understood what she was thinking. Instinctive awe crept into Mary's sympathy as she looked at the broad, dark face in its dejection and sorrow.

Light from the fire glimmered in his eyes as they met hers. It struck a dull red band under the shaggy grizzled hair standing up from his forehead. Tattered his shirt might be and his faded dungarees show patches sewed on with black shark's teeth; but Mary knew he was a man of importance in the tribe from which he had come.

"N'goola is my daughter—and not my daughter," the old man said. "I am a man of the *Wabarrie* tribe, *waich bronga*. Gwelnit, the name my fathers gave me. Jo Moses, what the white people called me. They found me in the reeds of a creek after a fight with white men. Many of my people were killed. The *boujera* of my people lies in the far south, along the Kalgan River."

Gwelnit could speak the language of the white people as if he

had known no other, Mary realised; but he reverted now and then to his own dialect, or to the slipshod half-and-half way the natives of various tribes spoke in the settlement.

This was the story he told her with many meanderings into the past.

The wife of a pioneer in that southern district had taken the native baby who was one of the few survivors of his tribe and reared him with her own son. The lads grew up together learning to be horsemen and stockmen. When young Jack Winterton went north to take up land beyond Port Hedland, Gwelnit went with him. He had become head stockman on Djeeral cattle station, won a woman of the tribe there in a fight with spears, and lived with her in the native camp.

Old men of the tribe were hostile to white people. Although they clung to the belief that the spirit of a child came to its mother through a rock, pool, or animal, impregnated with the vitality of remote ancestors, they had decided that the association of their women with white men weakened the tribe. They foresaw that it would die out, as so many tribes had done, if they did not safeguard their women. Experience had taught the old men that light-coloured babies resulted from intercourse between native women and white men, and light colour was considered a sign of weakness in a child. For this reason women of the tribe were forbidden to give their bodies to white men.

With fierce pride the women showed off their babies, delighting in the glossy darkness of their skin. None had been more fierce in her pride than Mittoon, Gwelnit's woman, when she bore him sons whose skin was as deeply bronze as his and her own.

Then she gave birth to a daughter. The old women tending her were suspicious when they saw the child and Mittoon overwhelmed by shame and rage. Gwelnit knew she had done what was forbidden when he, too, saw the baby. His anger rose because his woman had brought this disgrace upon him, a stranger in the tribe, yet of pure blood: a man her kinsmen had come to trust and admitted to all rights. But Mittoon's anger had been greater than his.

"It was the boss," Mittoon said." The old man's voice trembled to the shock of remembering. "When you were away on the bullock muster, Gwelnit, I went to the big house for stores. He took me into the store-miah and shut the door. Nothing would come of it. No one would know, he said. Now there is this child to shame me. Aie! Aie!"

Gwelnit had spent happy years with his woman. She had been slight and girlish when he practised throwing spears to win her from the man of another tribe to whom she was promised. She grew full-

bosomed and handsome; he never doubted her loyalty to him and to the tribe. What disturbed him most was that the man he had served faithfully for many years should have brought this trouble upon them.

"The child will not live," Mittoon said in her anger," the old man mourned. "'Our people must know I was forced by the white man. Soon they will forget what has happened.'"

Gwelnit had stood looking at the baby in the *coolimon*: its delicate limbs of yellowy-brown, the black lashes curled up from sleeping eyes, tiny hands. He remembered that once he had been a little creature like this—and as helpless. His anger left him.

"She is my daughter," he told the old women. "See that she is well cared for."

The old women knew what that meant. A man had the right to claim any child borne by his woman. They dared not disobey Gwelnit.

Mittoon brooded sullenly over his decision. She refused to take any notice of the baby. Her breasts were heavy with milk but she would not feed the child.

In the evening when Gwelnit returned from work on the run or in the stockyards, he would find Mittoon squatted on the ground outside the *wurley*. Inside, the baby wailed fretfully. He would lift her, wash her, and stand over Mittoon while she suckled the little one. Every morning and night, he did that; and every morning and night he and Mittoon quarrelled about the child.

N'goola, he called her, because she was like a small brown and yellow flower which grew along the creeks and in the swamps of his *boujera*. Gwelnit warned Mittoon that if she did not feed and care for N'goola he would take the child away. Mittoon's anger and jealousy smouldered because Gwelnit's eyes glowed when he looked at the child, and darkened as they turned to her, Mittoon, his woman.

When Gwelnit returned from work one evening, there was no wailing in the *wurley*. Mittoon sat outside, as usual, sullen and brooding.

Gwelnit looked into the *wurley*. The *coolimon* was empty.

"Where is N'goola?" The fear that moved him then vibrated in the old man's voice.

"The ant people have got her," Mittoon said. "The yellow one will disgrace me no more."

Gwelnit seized her in his fury.

"Where did you put her?" he demanded.

Mittooon would not say. Not until she was terrified and bleeding from his blows, did she cry:

"On the ants' nest . . . near the Big Rock."

Gwelnit dashed away through the scrub. Darkness had fallen and he had to find a track through the mulga and thorn-bush which led to the Big Rock ten miles away. Then he ran, ran with the speed of his emu brothers. His brain was bursting: his breath could hardly drive him along when he came to the open country on which the Big Rock stood, with the dumps of ants' nests scattered out from it.

The moon was rising as he searched among them, stopping now and then to listen for any sound; but there was no frail cry to guide him. At last he found her, lying on her back; a little yellow body to which swarms of black ants were clinging, sucking at her eyes and mouth, every moist hidden fold of her limbs.

Gwelnit took her in his arms. She was still alive, still breathing, but so faintly that he could not believe the ant people had not already taken her spirit. He brushed them from her, plucked them from her eyes and mouth, and from the broken skin on her forehead into which they were burrowing. He had nothing to revive her except his own spittle. He put that in her mouth.

Quickly, carefully, he carried her back along the track, stopping again and again to put his mouth to hers and listen for the sound of her breathing.

When he confronted Mittooon with the child in his arms, he said: "If N'goola does not live—Mittooon will not."

Mittooon took the baby. Its mouth was too weak to suck. She squeezed her nipples so that the milk fell drop by drop into N'goola's mouth. The madness which had come over her man Mittooon could not understand.

His pity and tenderness for the little one were strange also to Gwelnit. Was there some magic within her that had melted the marrow of his bones? Had the spirit of bygone ancestors in her eyes won him?

Gwelnit watched to see that Mittooon did everything necessary for the child. There was no need to watch, he realised after a while, because Mittooon feared he would kill her if N'goola died.

The old women exclaimed because the ants had not eaten the little one's bones dry; and because she had not perished of thirst lying out in the sun all day. But she was strong, his N'goola, Gwelnit exulted: she had the will to live. He rejoiced as she grew. When she was a little girl, she had been as quick and graceful as a bird,

N'goola. He was proud of her: proud when she could run to him and call him *mumae*.

With a quivering under her skin, and a quickening of her senses, Mary heard the old man describe how, when N'goola was playing with other children in the camp, sometimes, they would call her "the yellow one"; and how she would fly at them, scratching and shrieking, until the mothers came and tore her away.

N'goola burnt quondongs, mixed the black dust with grease, and rubbed it over her body. But it was no use. The other children laughed and teased her more than ever for trying to look like them.

Mary could see it all, the little girl smeared with greasy black dust, and the naked, dark-skinned children dancing round her, jeering and driving her to a frenzy: then a big man coming out from the trees, shouting angrily at them, taking the little girl in his arms and washing the black stuff from her body. What was it he had told her? That the colour of the skin did not matter. She must laugh and have courage to be a good member of the tribe. Then everybody would forget that an evil spirit had frightened her mother and stolen some of the baby's skin colour before it was born.

There was a song he had sung to comfort the child: a song about a flower, brown and yellow, which grew in a far-away country. Blind Nelly, too, sang this song. It told about two children who had wandered away into the bush and were lost, until their mother found them, following the scent of the *n'goola* they had picked and carried about with them.

"N'goola was six years old when a mounted trooper rode into the camp and took her away." The old man's voice drew Mary's attention back to his story.

Gwelnit was mustering cattle in the back hills when it happened. N'goola had been accepted by the tribe, then. Her gaiety and nimble grace were pleasing to the old men. They had given her a place in tribal organisation. When Gwelnit returned, Mittoon wept and howled because she thought Gwelnit would blame her for letting the trooper take the child; but every man and woman in the camp was angry and indignant at the way the trooper had seized N'goola, tied her hands together, bound a handkerchief over her mouth, and ridden away with her.

Gwelnit saddled a horse in the boss's yards and rode off to the police station in the Port.

The policemen laughed when he told them he had come to inquire why they had taken away his daughter.

"She's not your daughter," the tall trooper said. "You're black as

the ace of spades, and she's a half-caste. Our instructions are to remove half-caste children from the native camps and send them south to learn the ways of white people in government institutions and mission schools."

Gwelnit cursed the white people in his rage and grief.

"Where have you sent her?" he asked.

The police would not tell him.

"The idea is," the trooper said, "to keep the kid away from natives so that she can forget she ever had anything to do with them."

Gwelnit left the police station distraught by the disaster which had befallen him and N'goola. From other natives in the township he learnt that she, with other little girls like her, had been put on a boat going south the day after she had been brought to the police station. Gwelnit was on the next boat going south.

On the boat he talked to one of the seamen. It would be hard to discover where the child had been sent, this man said. There were Roman Catholic, Salvation Army, Methodist and other "homes", in outlying suburbs of Perth, which received a subsidy from the Government for looking after half-caste children.

Gwelnit made the rounds of all of them inquiring for N'goola; but no one would tell him anything about her. Nowhere could he find her.

Mary's mind seethed to the conflict which had arisen within her. Had the old man made her see and feel what his will contrived for her to see and feel? Or was it true that she was "the little yellow one" other children had jeered at in the native camp? Even if it were true she would not admit it, she told herself. She was sorry for the old man; but after all she was half white. He was not her father: her father had been a white man.

People in the settlement said she was "a crawler to the whites". But she crawled to nobody, Mary thought resentfully: neither to them nor to the whites.

Her sympathies were all with the dark people. She had learnt hymns and poetry at school, but they did not move her like Blind Nelly's songs, or the fragments of corroboree songs and stories old aboriginal men and women told in the settlement.

Yet she had struggled so long to win for herself the right to live like a white woman in a real house, and to be regarded as a decent person, she could not give up the struggle now. It had taught her to be stubborn and independent. So far nothing else had come of it. She could not get permission even to build a new house on her block of

land. It would never be granted, she was sure, if she allowed this old man to call her his daughter and took him to live with her.

Gwelnit's voice drew and held her again.

He had wandered to the north and to the east in his search for N'goola: to the cities and townships white men had built everywhere. On gold mining camps and outback stations, on native reserves and in ports along the coast, he had begged for news of N'goola. Nobody could tell him anything about her.

For thirty years he had wandered, up and down, all over the country, looking for her, calling her name. Now he was old: he could walk no farther. This settlement near what had once been a corroboree ground for south-west tribes, he feared, was the last place he would reach.

"If no one has seen or heard of N'goola, here," he said from the depths of his weariness and despair, "I will return to the *boujera* of my people, and wait for the spirits of my fathers to come for me."

The old man moved back from the embers of his fire when he had no more to say. Their glow touched the deeply furrowed, weather-beaten bronze of his face.

His eyes went past Mary, unwilling to meet hers. He gave no sign of having sensed what he had done to her, lifting a shroud from her mind, and stirring in her that conflict between her desire to live like a white woman and her loyalty to traditions of the dark people.

She knew, all the same, he was aware of her desire to leave him without a word which would unite her with him and his quest.

Silence hung between them: a silence heavy and oppressive.

Mary broke it.

"You need wander no farther, *mumae*," she said. "I am N'goola."

Note: Yienda (you); Bulyarrie (group in tribal relationship); nyoonagar (black people); wongi (native people); waich bronga (emu totem); boujera (tribal territory); coolimon (oval wooden bowl for carrying food, and babies); quondong (stones of native cherry); wurley (shelter of bark and brushwood); mumae (father); n'goola (wild boronia).

W. E. H. Stanner

The Dreaming

I

THE blackfellow's outlook on the universe and man is shaped by a remarkable conception, which Spencer and Gillen immortalised as "the dream time" or *alcheringa* of the Arunta or Aranda tribe. Some anthropologists have called it The Eternal Dream Time. I prefer to call it what the blacks call it in English—The Dreaming, or just Dreaming.

A central meaning of The Dreaming *is* that of a sacred, heroic time long long ago when man and nature came to be as they are; but neither "time" nor "history" as we understand them is involved in this meaning. I have never been able to discover any aboriginal word for *time* as an abstract concept. And the sense of "history" is wholly alien here. We shall not understand The Dreaming fully except as a complex of meanings. A blackfellow may call his totem, or the place from which his spirit came, his Dreaming. He may also explain the existence of a custom, or a law of life, as causally due to The Dreaming.

A concept so impalpable and subtle naturally suffers badly by translation into our dry and abstract language. The blacks sense this difficulty. I can recall one intelligent old man who said to me, with a cadence almost as though he had been speaking verse:

*White man got no dreaming,
Him go 'nother way.
White man, him go different,
Him got road belong himself.*

In their own dialects, they use terms like *alcheringa*, *mipuramibirina*, *boaradja*—often almost untranslatable, or meaning literally something like "men of old". It is as difficult to be sure of the objective effects of the idea on their lives as of its subjective implications for them.

Although, as I have said, *The Dreaming* conjures up the notion of a sacred, heroic time of the indefinitely remote past, such a time is also, in a sense, still part of the present. One cannot "fix" *The Dreaming* *in* time: it was, and is, everywhen. We should be very wrong to try to read into it the idea of a Golden Age, or a Garden of Eden, though it was an Age of Heroes, when the ancestors did marvellous things that men can no longer do. The blacks are not at all insensitive to Mary Webb's "wistfulness that is the past", but they do not, in aversion from present or future, look back on it with yearning and nostalgia. Yet it has for them an unchallengeably sacred authority.

Clearly, *The Dreaming* is many things in one. Among them, a kind of narrative of things that once happened; a kind of charter of things that still happen; and a kind of *logos* or principle of order transcending everything significant for aboriginal man. If I am correct in saying so, it is much more complex philosophically than we have so far realised. I greatly hope that artists and men of letters who (it seems increasingly) find inspiration in aboriginal Australia will use all their gifts of empathy, but avoid banal projection and subjectivism, if they seek to borrow the notion.

Why the blackfellow thinks of "dreaming" as the nearest equivalent in English is a puzzle. It may be because it is by *the act* of dreaming, as reality and symbol, that the aboriginal mind makes contact—thinks it makes contact—with whatever mystery it is that connects *The Dreaming* and the Here-and-Now.

II

How shall one deal with so subtle a conception? One has two options: educe its subjective logic and rationale from the "elements" which the blackfellow stumblingly offers in trying to give an explanation; or relate, as best one may, to things familiar in our own intellectual history, the objective figure it traces on their social life. There are dangers in both courses.

The first is a matter, so to speak, of learning to "think black", not imposing Western categories of understanding, but seeking to conceive of things as the blackfellow himself does.

In our modern understanding, we tend to see "mind" and "body", "body" and "spirit", "spirit" and "personality", "personality" and "name" as in some sense separate, even opposed, entities though we manage to connect them up in some fashion into the unity or oneness of "person" or "individual". The blackfellow does not seem to think

this way. The distinctiveness we give to "mind", "spirit" and "body", and our contrast of "body" *versus* "spirit" are not there, and the whole notion of "the person" is enlarged. To a blackfellow, a man's name, spirit, and shadow are "him" in a sense which to us may seem passing strange. One should not ask a blackfellow: "What is your name?" To do so embarrasses and shames him. The name is like an intimate part of the body, with which another person does not take liberties. The blacks do not mind talking about a dead person in an oblique way but, for a long time, they are extremely reluctant even to breathe his name. In the same way, to threaten a man's shadow is to threaten him. Nor may one treat lightly the physical place from which his spirit came. By extension, his totem, which is also associated with that place, and with his spirit, should not be lightly treated.

In such a context one has not succeeded in "thinking black" until one's mind can, without intellectual struggle, enfold into some kind of oneness the notions of body, spirit, ghost, shadow, name, spirit-site, and totem. To say so may seem a contradiction, or suggest a paradox, for the blackfellow can and does, on some occasions, conceptually isolate the "elements" of the "unity" most distinctly. But his abstractions do not put him at war with himself. The separable elements I have mentioned are all present in the metaphysical heart of the idea of "person", but the overruling mood is one of belief, not of inquiry or dissent. So long as the belief in *The Dreaming* lasts, there can be no "momentary flash of Athenian questioning" to grow into a great movement of sceptical disbelief which destroys the given unities.

There are many other such "onenesses" which I believe I could substantiate. A blackfellow may "see" as "a unity" two persons, such as two siblings or a grandparent and grandchild; or a living man and something inanimate, as when he tells you that, say, the woolly-but tree, his totem, is his wife's brother. (This is not quite as strange as it may seem. Even modern psychologists tend to include part of "environment" in a "definition" of "person" or "personality".) There is also some kind of unity between waking-life and dream-life: the means by which, in aboriginal understanding, a man fathers a child, is not by sexual intercourse, but by the act of dreaming about a spirit-child. His own spirit, during a dream, "finds" a child and directs it to his wife, who then conceives. Physical congress between a man and a woman is contingent, not a necessary prerequisite. Through the medium of dream-contact with a spirit an artist is inspired to produce a new song. It is by dreaming that a man divines the intention of someone to kill him by sorcery, or of relatives to

visit him. And, as I have suggested, it is by the act of dreaming, in some way difficult for a European to grasp because of the force of our analytic abstractions, that a blackfellow conceives himself to make touch with whatever it is that is continuous between The Dreaming and the Here-and-Now.

The truth of it seems to be that man, society and nature, and past, present and future, are at one together within a unitary system of such a kind that its ontology cannot illumine minds too much under the influence of humanism, rationalism and science. One cannot easily, in the mobility of modern life and thought, grasp the vast intuitions of stability and permanence, and of life and man, at the heart of aboriginal ontology.

It is fatally easy for Europeans, encountering such things for the first time, to go on to suppose that "mysticism" of this kind rules *all* aboriginal thought. It is not so. "Logical" thought and "rational" conduct are about as widely present in aboriginal life as they are on the simpler levels of European life. Once one understands three things—the primary intuitions which the blackfellow has formed about the nature of the universe and man, those things in both which he thinks interesting and significant, and the conceptual system from within which he reasons about them, then the suppositions about pre-logicality, illogicality and non-rationality can be seen to be merely absurd. And if one wishes to see a really brilliant demonstration of deductive thought, one has only to see a blackfellow tracking a wounded kangaroo, and persuade him to say why he interprets given signs in a certain way.

The second means of dealing with the notion of The Dreaming is, as I said, to try to relate it to things familiar in our own intellectual history. From this viewpoint, it is a cosmogony, an account of the begetting of the universe, a story about creation. It is also a cosmology, an account or theory of how what was created became an orderly system. To be more precise, how the universe became a moral system.

If one analyses the hundreds of tales about The Dreaming, one can see within them three elements. The first concerns the great *marvels*—how all the fire and water in the world were stolen and recaptured; how men made a mistake over sorcery and now have to die from it; how the hills, rivers and waterholes were made; how the sun, moon and stars were set upon their courses; and many other dramas of this kind. The second element tells how certain things were *instituted* for the first time—how animals and men diverged from a joint stock that was neither one nor the other; how the black-nosed kangaroo got his black nose and the porcupine his quills; how

such social divisions as tribes, clans and language groups were set up; how spirit-children were first placed in the waterholes, the winds and the leaves of trees. A third element, if I am not mistaken, allows one to suppose that many of the main institutions of present-day life were *already ruling* in The Dreaming, e.g., marriage, exogamy, sister-exchange, and initiation, as well as many of the well-known breaches of custom. The men of The Dreaming committed adultery, betrayed and killed each other, were greedy, stole and committed the very wrongs committed by those now alive.

Now, if one disregards the imagery in which the verbal literature of The Dreaming is cast, one may perhaps come to three conclusions.

The tales are a kind of commentary, or statement, on what is thought to be permanent and ordained at the very basis of the world and life. They are a way of stating the principle which animates things. I would call them a poetic key to Reality. The aborigine does not ask himself the philosophical-type questions: What is "real"? How many "kinds" of "reality" are there? What are the "properties" of "reality"? How are the properties "inter-connected"? This is the idiom of Western intellectual discourse and the fruit of a certain social history. His tales are, however, a kind of answer to such questions so far as they have been asked at all. They may not be a "definition", but they are a "key" to reality, a key to the singleness and the plurality of things set up once-for-all when, in The Dreaming, the universe became man's universe. The active philosophy of aboriginal life transforms this "key", which is expressed in the idiom of poetry, drama and symbolism, into a principle that The Dreaming determines not only what life *is* but also *what it can be*. Life, so to speak, is a one-possibility thing, and what this is, is the "meaning" of The Dreaming.

The tales are also a collation of *what is validly known* about such ordained permanencies. The blacks cite The Dreaming as a charter of absolute validity in answer to all questions of *why* and *how*. In this sense, the tales can be regarded as being, perhaps not a definition, but a "key" of Truth.

They also state, by their constant recitation of what was done rightly and wrongly in The Dreaming, the ways in which good men should, and bad men will, act now. In this sense, they are a "key" or guide to the norms of conduct, and a prediction of how men will err.

One may thus say that, after a fashion—a cryptic, symbolic, and poetic fashion—the tales are "a philosophy" in the garb of a verbal literature. The European has a philosophic literature which expresses

a largely deductive understanding of reality, truth, goodness and beauty. The blackfellow has a mythology, a ritual and an art which express an intuitive, visionary and poetic understanding of the same ultimates. In following out The Dreaming, the blackfellow "lives" this philosophy. It is an implicit philosophy, but nevertheless a real one. Whereas we hold (and may live) a philosophy of abstract propositions, attained by someone standing professionally outside "life" and treating it as an object of contemplation and inquiry, the blackfellow holds his philosophy in mythology, attained as the social product of an indefinitely ancient past, and proceeds to live it out "in" life, in part through a ritual and an expressive art, and in part through non-sacred social customs.

European minds are made uneasy by the facts that the stories are, quite plainly, preposterous; are often a mass of internal contradictions; are encrusted by superstitious fancies about magic, sorcery, hobgoblins and superhuman heroes; and lack the kind of theme and structure—in other words, the "story" element—for which we look. Many of us cannot help feeling that such things can only be the products of absurdly ignorant credulity and a lower order of mentality. This is to fall victim to a facile fallacy. Our own intellectual history is not an absolute standard by which to judge others. The worst imperialisms are those of preconception.

Custom is the reality, beliefs but the shadows which custom makes on the wall. Since the tales, in any case, are not really "explanatory" in purpose or function, they naturally lack logic, system and completeness. It is simply pointless to look for such things within them. But we are not entitled to suppose that, because the tales are fantastical, the social life producing them is itself fantastical. The shape of reality is always distorted in the shadows it throws. One finds much logic, system and rationality in the blacks' actual scheme of life.

These tales are neither simply illustrative nor simply explanatory; they are fanciful and poetic in content because they are based on visionary and intuitive insights into mysteries; and, if we are ever to understand them, we must always take them in their complex context. If, then, they make more sense to the poet, the artist and the philosopher, than to the clinicians of human life, let us reflect on the withering effect on sensibility of our pervasive rationalism, rather than deprecate the gifts which produced the aboriginal imaginings. And in no case should we expect the tales, *prima facie*, to be even interesting if studied out of context. Aboriginal mythology is quite unlike the Scandinavian, Indian or Polynesian mythologies.

III

In my own understanding, *The Dreaming* is a proof that the blackfellow shares with us two abilities which have largely made human history what it is.

The first of these we might call "the metaphysical gift". I mean the ability to transcend oneself, to make acts of imagination so that one can stand "outside" or "away from" oneself, and turn the universe, oneself and one's fellows into objects of contemplation. The second ability is a "drive" to try to "make sense" out of human experience and to find some "principle" in the whole human situation. This "drive" is, in some way, built into the constitution of the human mind. No one who has real knowledge of aboriginal life can have any doubt that they possess, and use, both abilities very much as we do. They differ from us only in the directions in which they turn their gifts, the idiom in which they express them, and the principles of intellectual control.

The blacks have no gods, just or unjust, to adjudicate the world. Not even by straining can one see in such culture-heroes as Baiame and Darumulum the true hint of a Yahveh, jealous, omniscient, and omnipotent. The ethical insights are dim and somewhat coarse in texture. One can find in them little trace, say, of the inverted pride, the self-scrutiny, and the consciousness of favour and destiny which characterised the early Jews. A glimpse, but no truly poignant sense, of moral dualism; no notion of grace or redemption; no whisper of inner peace and reconciliation; no problems of worldly life to be solved only by a consummation of history; no heaven of reward or hell of punishment. The blackfellow's after-life is but a shadowy replica of worldly-life, so none flee to inner sanctuary to escape the world. There are no prophets, saints or *illuminati*. There is a concept of goodness, but it lacks true scruple. Men can become ritually unclean, but may be cleansed by a simple mechanism. There is a moral law but, as in the beginning, men are both good and bad, and no one is racked by the knowledge. I imagine there could never have been an aboriginal Ezekiel, any more than there could have been a Job. The two sets of insights cannot easily be compared, but it is plain that their underlying moods are wholly unlike, and their store of meaningfulness very uneven. In the one there seem an almost endless possibility of growth, and a mood of censoriousness and pessimism. In the other, a kind of standstill, and a mood which is neither tragic nor optimistic. The aborigines are not shamed or inspired by a religious thesis of what men might become by faith and grace.

Their metaphysic assents, without brooding or challenge, to what men evidently have to be because the terms of life are cast. Yet they have a kind of religiosity cryptically displayed in their magical awareness of nature, in their complex totemism, ritual and art, and perhaps too even in their intricately ordered life.

They are, of course, nomads—hunters and foragers who grow nothing, build nothing, and stay nowhere long. They make almost no physical mark on the environment. Even in areas which are still inhabited, it takes a knowledgeable eye to detect their recent presence. Within a matter of weeks, the roughly cleared camp-sites may be erased by sun, rain and wind. After a year or two there may be nothing to suggest that the country was ever inhabited. Until one stumbles on a few old flint-tools, a stone quarry, a shell-midden, a rock painting, or something of the kind, one may think the land had never known the touch of man.

They neither dominate their environment nor seek to change it. "Children of nature" they are not, nor are they nature's "masters". One can only say they are "at one" with nature. The whole ecological principle of their life might be summed up in the Baconian aphorism—*natura non vincitur nisi parendo*: "nature is not to be commanded except by obeying". Naturally, one finds metaphysical and social reflections of the fact.

They move about, carrying their scant possessions, in small bands of anything from ten to sixty persons. Each band belongs to a given locality. A number of bands—anything from three or four up to twelve or fifteen, depending on the fertility of the area—make up a "tribe". A tribe is usually a language or dialect group which thinks of itself as having a certain unity of common speech and shared customs. The tribes range in size from a few hundred to a few thousand souls.

One rarely sees a tribe as a formed entity. It comes together and lives as a unit only for a great occasion—a feast, a corroboree, a hunt, an initiation, or a formal duel. After a few days—at the most, weeks—it breaks up again into smaller bands or sections of bands: most commonly into a group of brothers, with their wives, children and grandchildren, and perhaps a few close relatives. These parties rove about their family locality or, by agreement, the territories of immediate neighbours. They do not wander aimlessly, but to a purpose, and in tune with the seasonal food supply. One can almost plot a year of their life in terms of movement towards the places where honey, yams, grass-seeds, eggs, or some other food-staple, is in bearing and ready for eating.

The uncomplex visible routine, and the simple segmentation, are very deceptive. It took well over half a century for Europeans to realise that, behind the outward show, was an inward structure of surprising complexity. It was a century before any real understanding of this structure developed.

In one tribe with which I am familiar, a very representative tribe, there are about 100 "invisible" divisions which have to be analysed before one can claim even a serviceable understanding of the tribe's organisation. The structure is much more complex than that of an Australian village of the same size. The complexity is in the most striking contrast with the comparative simplicity which rules in the two other departments of aboriginal life—the material culture, on the one hand, and the ideational or metaphysical culture on the other. We have, I think, to try to account for this contrast in some way.

Their creative "drive" to make sense and order out of things has, for some reason, concentrated on the social rather than on the metaphysical or the material side. Consequently, there has been an unusually rich development of what the anthropologist calls "social structure", the network of enduring relations recognised between people. This very intricate system is an intellectual and social achievement of a high order. It is not, like an instinctual response, a phenomenon of "nature"; it is not, like art or ritual, a complex type of behaviour passionately added to "nature", in keeping with metaphysical insight but without rational and intelligible purposes which can be clearly stated; it has to be compared, I think, with such a secular achievement as, say, Parliamentary Government in a European society. It is truly positive knowledge.

One may see within it three things: given customs, "of which the memory of man runneth not to the contrary"; a vast body of cumulative knowledge about the effects of these customs on a society in given circumstances; and the use of the power of abstract reason to rationalise the resultant relations into a system.

But it is something much more: it has become *the source of the dominant mode of aboriginal thinking*. The blacks use it to give a bony structure to parts of the world-outlook suggested by intuitive speculation. I mean by this that they have taken some of its fundamental principles and relations and have applied them to very much wider sets of phenomena. This tends to happen if any type of system of thought becomes truly dominant. It is, broadly, what Europeans did with "religion" and "science" as systems: extended their principles and categories to fields far beyond the contexts in which the systems grew.

Thus, the blacks have taken the male-female social principle and have extended it to the non-human world. In one tribe I have studied all women, without exception, call particular birds or trees by the same kinship terms which they apply to actual relatives. In the same way, all men without exception use comparable terms for a different set of trees or birds. From this results what the anthropologist calls "sex totemism". The use of other principles results in other types of totemism. An understanding of this simple fact removes much of the social, if not the ritual, mystery of totemism. Again, the principle of relatedness itself, relatedness between known people by known descent through known marriages, is extended over the whole face of human society. The same terms of kinship which are used for close agnatic and affinal relatives are used for every other person an aborigine meets in the course of his life: strangers, friends, enemies and known kin may all be called by the same terms as one uses for brother, father, mother's sister, father's mother's brother, and so on. This is what an anthropologist means when he says "aboriginal society is a society of kinship".

It might even be argued that the blacks have done much the same thing with "time". Time as a continuum is a concept only hazily present in the aboriginal mind. What might be called *social time* is, in a sense, "bent" into cycles or circles. The most controlled understanding of it is by reckoning in terms of generation-classes, which are arranged into named and recurring cycles. As far as the blackfellow thinks about time at all, his interest lies in the cycles rather than in the continuum, and each cycle is in essence a principle for dealing with social inter-relatedness.

IV

Out of all this may come for some an understanding of the blackfellow very different from that which has passed into the ignorance and vulgarity of popular opinion.

One may see that, like all men, he is a metaphysician in being able to transcend himself. With the metaphysic goes a mood and spirit, which I can only call a mood and spirit of "assent": neither despair nor resignation, optimism nor pessimism, quietism nor indifference. The mood, and the outlook beneath it, make him hopelessly out of place in a world in which the Renaissance has triumphed only to be perverted, and in which the products of secular humanism, rationalism and science challenge their own hopes, indeed, their beginnings.

Much association with the blackfellow makes me feel I may not be far wrong in saying that, unlike us, he seems to see "life" as a

one-possibility thing. This may be why he seems to have almost no sense of tragedy. If "tragedy is a looking at fate for a lesson in deportment on life's scaffold", the aborigine seems to me to have read the lesson and to have written it into the very conception of how men should live, or else to have stopped short of the insight that there are gods either just or unjust. Nor have I found in him much self-pity. These sentiments can develop only if life presents real alternatives, or if it denies an alternative that one feels should be there. A philosophy of assent fits only a life of unvarying constancy. I do not at all say that pain, sorrow and sadness have no place in aboriginal life, for I have seen them all too widely. All I mean is that the blacks seem to have gone beyond, or not quite attained, the human *quarrel* with such things. Their rituals of sorrow, their fortitude in pain, and their undemonstrative sadness seem to imply a reconciliation with the terms of life such that "peace is the understanding of tragedy and at the same time its preservation", or else that they have not sensed life as baffled by either fate or wisdom.

Like all men, he is also a philosopher in being able to use his power of abstract reason. His genius, his *métier*, and—in some sense—his fate, is that because of endowment and circumstance this power has channelled itself mainly into one activity, "making sense" out of the social relations among men living together. His intricate social organisation is an impressive essay on the economy of conflict, tension and experiment in a life situation at the absolute pole of our own.

Like all men, too, he pays the price of his insights and solutions. We look to a continuous unfolding of life, and to a blissful attainment of the better things for which, we say, man has an infinite capacity. For some time, nothing has seemed of less consequence to us than the maintenance of continuity. The cost, in instability and inequity, is proving very heavy. Aboriginal life has endured feeling that continuity, not man, is the measure of all. The cost, in the world of power and change, is extinction. What defeats the blackfellow in the modern world, fundamentally, is his transcendentalism. So much of his life and thought are concerned with The Dreaming that it stultifies his ability to develop. This is not a new thing in human history. A good analogy is with the process in Chinese poetry by which, according to Arthur Waley, its talent for classical allusion became a vice which finally destroyed it altogether.

A "philosophy of life", that is, a system of mental attitudes towards the conduct of life, may or may not be consistent with an actual way of life. Whether it is or is not will depend on how big a gap there is,

if any, between what life *is* and what men think life *ought to be*. If Ideal and Real drift too far away from one another (as they did at the end of the Middle Ages, and seem increasingly to do in this century) men face some difficult options. They have to change their way of life, or their philosophy, or both, or live unhappily somewhere in between. We are familiar enough with the "war of the philosophies" and the tensions of modern life which express them. Problems of this kind had no place, I would say, in traditional aboriginal life. It knew nothing, and could not, I think, have known anything of the Christian's straining for inner perfection; of "moral man and immoral society"; of the dilemma of liberty and authority; of intellectual uncertainty, class warfare, and discontent with one's lot in life—all of which, in some sense, are problems of the gap between Ideal and Real.

The aborigines may have been in Australia for as long as 10,000 years. No one at present can do more than guess whence or how they came, and there is little more than presumptive evidence on which to base a guess. The span of time, immense though it may have been, matters less than the fact that, so far as one can tell, they have been almost completely isolated. Since their arrival, no foreign stimulus has touched them, except on the fringes of the northern and north-western coasts. To these two facts we must add two others. The physical environment has, evidently, not undergone any marked general change, although there has been a slow desiccation of parts of the centre into desert, and some limited coastline changes. The fourth fact is that their tools and material crafts seem to have been very unprogressive.

If we put these four facts together—an immensely long span of time, spent in more or less complete isolation, in a fairly constant environment, with an unprogressive material culture, we may perhaps see why sameness, absence of change, fixed routine, regularity, call it what you will, is a main dimension of their thought and life. Let us sum up this aspect as leading to a metaphysical emphasis on abidingness. They place a very special value on things remaining unchangingly themselves, on keeping life to a routine which is known and trusted. Absence of change, which means certainty of expectation, seems to them a good thing in itself. One may say, their Ideal and Real come very close together. The value given to continuity is so high that they are not simply a people "without a history": they are a people who have been able, in some sense, to "defeat" history, to become a-historical in mood, outlook and life. This is why, among them, the philosophy of assent, the glove,

fits the hand of actual custom almost to perfection, and the forms of social life, the art, the ritual, and much else take on a wonderful symmetry.

Their tools and crafts, meagre—pitifully meagre—though they are, have nonetheless been good enough to let them win the battle for survival, and to win it comfortably at that. With no pottery, no knowledge of metals, no wheel, no domestication of animals, no agriculture, they have still been able, not only to live and people the entire continent, but even in a sense to prosper, to win a surplus of goods and develop leisure-time occupations. The evidences of the surplus of yield over animal need are to be seen in the spider-web of trade routes criss-crossing the continent, on which a large volume of non-utilitarian articles circulated, themselves largely the products of leisure. The true leisure-time activities—social entertaining, great ceremonial gatherings, even much of the ritual and artistic life—impressed observers even from the beginning. The notion of aboriginal life as always preoccupied with the risk of starvation, as always a hair's breadth from disaster, is as great a caricature as Hobbes' notion of savage life as "poor, nasty, brutish, and short". The best corrective of any such notion is to spend a few nights in an aboriginal camp, and experience directly the unique joy in life which can be attained by a people of few wants, an other-worldly cast of mind and a simple scheme of life which so shapes a day that it ends with communal singing and dancing in the firelight.

The more one sees of aboriginal life the stronger the impression that its mode, its ethos and its principle are variations on a single theme—continuity, constancy, balance, symmetry, regularity, system, or some such quality as these words convey.

One of the most striking things is that there are no great conflicts over power, no great contests for place and office. This single fact explains much else, because it rules out so much that would be destructive of stability. The idea of a formal chief, or a leader with authority over the persons of others in a large number of fields of life—say, for example, as with a Polynesian or African chief—just does not seem to make sense to a blackfellow. Nor does even the modified Melanesian notion—that of a man becoming some sort of a leader because he accumulates a great deal of garden-wealth and so gains prestige. There are leaders in the sense of men of unusual skill, initiative and force, and they are given much respect; they may even attract something like a following; but one finds no trace of formal or institutionalised chieftainship. So there are no offices to stimulate ambition, intrigue, or the use of force; to be envied or

fought over; or to be lost or won. Power—a real thing in every society—is diffused mainly through one sex, the men, but in such a way that it is not to be won, or lost, in concentrations, by craft, struggle, or coup. It is very much a male-dominated society. The older men dominate the younger, the men dominate the women. Not that the women are chattels—Dr. Phyllis Kaberry in her interesting book *Aboriginal Woman* disposed of that Just-So story very effectively, but there is a great deal of discrimination against them. The mythology justifies this by tales telling how men had to take power from women by force in The Dreaming. The psychology (perhaps the truth) of it is as obvious as it is amusing. If women were not kept under, they would take over!

At all events, the struggle for power occurred once-for-all. Power, authority, influence, age, status, knowledge, all run together and, in some sense, are the same kind of thing. The men of power, authority, and influence are old men—at least, mature men; the greater the secret knowledge and authority the higher the status; and the initiations are so arranged (by the old men) that the young men do not acquire full knowledge, and so attain status and authority, until they too are well advanced in years. One can thus see why the great term of respect is “old man”—*maluka*, as in *We of the Never-Never*. The system is self-protective and self-renewing. The real point of it all is that the checks and balances seem nearly perfect, and no one really seems to want the kind of satisfaction that might come from a position of domination. At the same time, there is a serpent in Eden. The narrow self-interest of men exploits The Dreaming.

Power over things? Every canon of good citizenship and common sense is against it, though there are, of course, clear property arrangements. But what could be more useless than a store of food that will not keep, or a heavy pile of spears that have to be carried everywhere? Especially, in a society in which the primary virtues are generosity and fair dealing. Nearly every social affair involving goods—food in the family, payments in marriage, inter-tribal exchange—is heavily influenced by equalitarian notions; a notion of reciprocity as a moral obligation; a notion of generously equivalent return; and a surprisingly clear notion of fair dealing, or making things “level” as the blackfellow calls it in English.

There is a tilt of the system towards the interests of the men, but given this tilt, everything else seems as if carefully calculated to keep it in place. The blacks do not fight over land. There are no wars or invasions to seize territory. They do not enslave each other. There

is no master-servant relation. There is no class division. There is no property or income inequality. The result is a homeostasis, far-reaching and stable.

I do not wish to create an impression of a social life without egotism, without vitality, without cross-purposes, without conflict. Indeed, there is plenty of all, as there is of malice, enmity, bad faith, and violence, running along the lines of sex-inequality and age-inequality. But this essential humanity exists, and runs its course, within a system whose first principle is the preservation of balance. And, arching over it all, is the *logos* of The Dreaming. How we shall state this when we fully understand it I do not know, but I should think we are more likely to ennoble it than not. Equilibrium ennobled is "abidingness". Piccarda's answer in the third canto of the *Paradiso* gives the implicit theme and logic of The Dreaming: *e la sua volontate è nostra pace*, "His will is our peace". But the gleam that lighted Judah did not reach the Australian wilderness, and the blacks follow The Dreaming only because their fathers did.

Potiphar's Wife

Joseph, when first your face compelled my childish eyes
The girls of Pharaoh's court were shredding marmalade,
Red stained their silver knives—so wide their glances strayed—
And dyed the orange fruit, your beauty's sacrifice.

You told me of the tents, the fiery sand, the date,
Sweeter, first picked, you said, than honey in the comb,
Old Potiphar was stern and I was late from Home,
I trembled at your grief for that fraternal hate.

Joseph, those were your dreams that so besieged my peace.
Risen, I knelt, I prayed. In vain. The livelong night
Those ardent wraiths would come, white nesting doves in flight,
To press against my soul their thousand ecstasies.

Fresh scented from the bath (now breaks my heart) I note
Vashti, my slave, has darned that rainbow once your coat.

ETHEL ANDERSON

Mary Durack

Feathered Feet

An extract from the novel Keep Him My Country, by Mary Durack, published this year. Tex Richardson, the head stockman of Trafalgar station, N.T., has been incapacitated and the manager, Stan Rolt, has sent the aboriginal stockboys out alone to complete the muster.

WONDITCH had spread his swag a little distance from the rest and lay sifting the noises of the night, the scattered bird cries and the stir of wings, the hollow knocking of horse bells from across the plain, the rustle of a lizard in the grass, the howl of a wild dog, the splash of a fish and the grunt of a crocodile from the billabong, the eerie, high-pitched call of the screaming owl. He stiffened in his swag and the call came again. After a while he got up stealthily and walked to the edge of the scrub.

Two emaciated old men came out of the shadows as he approached. Wonditch greeted them respectfully, noticing that they were weak from fasting and loss of blood. The salutations over, all three dropped to their haunches and the man who was called Doolup plunged into a wordy explanation of their errand. Making a small area of ground clear of grass and leaves he sketched as he spoke, the marks he made showing clearly in the bright moonlight.

There had been yet another murder in the reserve country, he explained. He did not dare mention the victim by name for fear of arousing his spirit but he drew upon the ground the sign of his totem, the wombat, and another secret sign by which he was known only to his peers in tribal lore. Wonditch sank his face in his hands and moaned with grief. He asked whether they had discovered the killer, whereat Doolup rubbed out the marks he had already made and drew two others. Wonditch trembled. Were they sure of this? The old men nodded emphatically. There could be no doubt of it. The murderer had been very cunning, using much bad magic, and all the time with his white man ways pretending to despise blackfellow business.

His guilt was obvious at once. He had become frightened when the eyes of the elders were turned on him and had spoken foolishly, declaring that the white people had much wisdom that was not possessed by the tribal elders. A man, he said, could die through loss of blood, and sickness and death were not always caused by sorcery.

They had carried out the ritual inquest on the dead man and had examined his entrails with great thoroughness for signs of foul play. Quivering with grief and rage Wonditch listened to the long recital of their conclusions, drawn from natural deduction but with the assistance of much magic. The evidence had all been there, even the mark of the string by which the murderer had dragged the sleeping man from his camp at night. The dastardly fellow had no right to the magic by which he ensured that his victim did not wake even when a small cut was made in his back, his kidney fat withdrawn, his heart pierced with a fine wire and the incision stuffed with grass and stones and carefully closed. The doomed man, still sleeping, was then returned to his camp.

He awoke next morning and went about his business unsuspectingly leading the man-making ceremonies and letting more blood flow from his veins than any of the others. It was only after three days that the effects of the ghastly operation began to show. He became weak and gradually fell into the sleep of death.

They laid the body in a tree, face upwards to the hot sun and placed underneath a number of stones, each representing a possible murderer. As the body began to decompose several drops of moisture fell upon a single stone. This would have been evidence enough, but to make doubly sure that no injustice was done they pulled the dead man's hair, each time calling a name. It was only when this man's name was called that the hair came out and at that moment the wind turned and the smoke from the dead man's fire blew in the direction of the murderer's camp.

That problem solved, ritual was carried out to select the avengers. The lot had fallen by all the sacred, secret and infallible rites of their tribe to Doolup, his companion and Wonditch. They must go together, wearing the feathered shoes, but it was Wonditch who must actually strike the avenging blow.

As the old man ceased talking Wonditch, still crouched in grief, began rocking to and fro on his heels. Doolup placed a hand on his shoulder and with his emaciated fingers brushed the tears from the face of the younger man. His heart cried for Wonditch in his sorrow, he said, but grief would strengthen his spear arm and make his aim swift and sure. Many years ago the dead man had officiated at

Wonditch's man-making ceremony and later, at the time of his subincision, had climbed into a tree and, opening wounds long healed, had let the strength-giving blood of sympathy flow down on the initiate. It was well known that Wonditch and he had loved as father and son.

Indeed, Wonditch promised, the vengeance would be carried out, but it must wait a while, no more than half a moon. The muster would be over then and this was an important muster. It meant a lot to Stan Rolt and who knew what would happen if they did not get these bullocks in on time? There was prestige at stake too because there was no white man in the camp. They had to do the whole job alone and they were short handed as it was.

The old men exchanged glances and shook their heads. This was a matter of urgency. The killer was so cunning that he was already taking care to cover up his tracks and it was thought that he planned to escape into Arnhem Land. He had already started on his journey but fortunately he must travel slowly as his lubra was sick with the curse of Julunggul upon her.

Wonditch got up from the ground and looked at his companions with haunted eyes. Why must the lot fall so often to him? Was it perhaps that the spirits of dreaming looked with disfavour upon his compromise with the white man and were determined that his life must not be easy?

"Where are the feathers?" he asked.

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Daylight spread across the sky and down among the trees. Birds twittered, screeched and swirled about the billabong. Three of the station hands were preparing to ride out to the muster.

"Rollo and Wallagul better take the packs straight on to bottle-tree yard," Dickie instructed. "We fellows got our dinner. We bring the cattle on sometime this afternoon."

He rode off in the lead, reins in his left hand, his right arm and pointed index finger swinging over the track that Wonditch had made through the grass the night before. At the edge of the scrub he paused while the others caught him up.

"Looks like two fella Doolup and Jarrimbee," he observed, studying the faint imprint of naked feet.

They rode on in silence and with a sense of awe, their eyes brooding out east, beyond the plain, beyond the dim, flat line of the hills.

Wonditch would never win acclaim as a good and reliable servant of the white man but for that he was a better blackfellow. One day,

perhaps, the police would put him in jail or he might be "sung dead" for a ritual murder that could have fallen, under other circumstances, to one of themselves. They all knew that his lot was not an easy one. His Trixie was a station-bred lubra who nagged and grumbled at the bush life and worried him into taking a station job. He liked the salt beef and white bread, the sugar and the tea, and tobacco was the breath of life to him but his tribal responsibilities made it hard for him to settle down. He lived in two worlds, uncomfortably dividing his allegiance between the flesh and the spirit.

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Wonditch and his companions had travelled swiftly through the night to a limestone outcrop where they had hidden the sacred shoes. Here they lit their fire and burned the already dislocated small toes of their right feet that must act as eyes for hazards in the darkness. The fast congealing blood that flowed from their severed veins formed a viscid base for the traditional patterning in ochre and the down of wild duck. Slowly human shapes became the dread outlines of apparition. Spectres stalking a nether world of fear, treading in feathered shoes that made neither sound nor track, they hurried on their way.

The old men had already "divined" that the victim would be discovered sleeping at a pandanus spring at the foot of the east range. They covered the miles quickly, travelling all night and through the following day, carefully avoiding the camping places of the tribespeople, taking direction from spirit beings in the shape of crows and lizards.

Sacred churinga stones grasped in their teeth guided them through the darkness of the following night to where the murderer lay with his woman beside a meagre fire. Parting the heavy foliage they saw the evildoer in the first light of dawn, face downwards with his head on his arms, lying a little apart from his lubra. Wonditch crept forward and stood with tapered spear poised above the shoulder blades of the sleeping man. . . . There is a place where a spear can enter a man's heart so that he dies without waking. If the woman wakes she has to be killed too, in case she recognises the wearer of the feathered shoes through his strange disguise.

Wonditch glanced at the woman's naked body, pitifully thin even for a woman of the hungry bush. She lay with her forearm across her eyes, the hand down-hanging to one side with fingers twisted and misshapen. She must die soon in any case because that was the sign of the big sickness. If she lived long enough the police would

find her and take her to the island and that would be a worse punishment than death by the swift spear of her countryman. It would be better for her if she woke.

The man stirred in his sleep and his strong shoulders twitched as the poised spear plunged to its mark. The body jerked and slumped and the life breath escaped in a thin-drawn whistle. The spear shaft was still quivering as Wonditch drew back into the darkness of the palms.

"The woman did not wake," he said, rejoining his companions in their hiding-place.

Spring Snow

I walk in a world of rondels, where pink
Blossoms return the rhyme of the white
Till I turn a corner and—Abracadabra!
The spring has gone, and winter's bright
Snowflakes descend—untimely sight
For September, a seasonly kink!

Poplar on poplar in amber air
Stands in its silver, whilst flake on flake
Of down, falling, floats whitely
As ballerinas in Swan Lake,
Till luminous flutterings make
A bright choreography there.

I watch the wind, turned Martha, blow,
Sweeping the down in balls to lie
In unmelting drift by the road's kerbing,
Raising a dust of flakes that fly
To buffet the startled passers-by
With a storm of catkin snow.

T. INGLIS MOORE

Roland E. Robinson

The Water-Lubras and the Lotus Bird

Extract from *The Crested Serpent*

(as related by Kianoo Tjeemairee of the Murinbata Tribe)

A GIRL called Wirreitman came out of the water of the river Kimmul. She put on a man's hairbelt and she bound up her long hair. She took a spear and a womerah and she went out hunting for wallaby. The girl went hunting through the bush and she could use the spear. She speared Ngalmungo a hill-kangaroo. She made two fire-sticks and made fire, and she cooked the kangaroo in a ground oven.

A man called Nogamin had been out hunting. He was carrying up a wallaby on his shoulder. He looked out and saw smoke rising beyond the trees. He started to walk up to the camp of the girl.

Wirreitman the girl looked out from her camp and saw him coming. The spear and the womerah she put to one side. Then she lay face down in the dust with her arms folded in front of her, waiting for the man to come up.

The man Nogamin came up carrying the wallaby. "Ai! what is the matter?" he asked. "Ah, I am no good," said the girl. "My stomach is no good." "What is the matter that you do not get up?" said Nogamin. "You want to get up and open up that kangaroo." "You, old man," said the girl, "you can take that kangaroo out for me. You can leave me the arms and legs." "Well," said Nogamin, "you want to get up." "No," said the girl, "I am sick in my stomach. I will get up by and by. You take that kangaroo and leave me the arms and legs."

Nogamin took the kangaroo out of the ground oven. He cut and broke away the arms and legs. He picked up the body of the kangaroo and left the camp. "Battai ya," he called to the girl. When Nogamin had gone the girl got up quickly. She picked up the parts of the kangaroo, the spear and the womerah and ran away.

As the man Nogamin walked along he thought about Wirreitman lying down in the camp. He thought of the way she was lying down and the way she hid her eyes when she spoke. "It might be that one is a girl," thought Nogamin. He stopped in his tracks. "It might be," he thought. "I must go back and find out."

He put down the wallaby and the kangaroo and went back. The camp was empty. Nogamin came up and looked at the place where Wirreitman had lain. In the dust he saw the imprint of her body. He saw the imprint of her thighs and folded arms and there, deep in the dust, were the two hollows her breasts had made.

Nogamin found the girl's tracks going out of the camp. He followed them, running, stopping to pick them up again, then running on. He called out to her, he stopped to find her tracks, then ran on again.

The girl had climbed up into a bottle-tree. Nogamin came up running. He looked and saw the girl sitting in the thrust-out branches of the bottle-tree. It was a big tree. He did not see how he could climb up its smooth, round, bottle-shaped trunk. Nogamin breathed hard; then he called softly to the girl: "O, come down to me, Balngun. You and I are good friends."

The girl in the bottle-tree laughed down at Nogamin. "Ah, no," she said. "This is my bottle-tree. I like sitting up here. But you," she mocked at him, "you come up to me."

Nogamin tried to climb the tree. As he did so the girl in the branches sang the tree and the bottle-tree began to get bigger and bigger and grow up more and more. And the girl mocked Nogamin as he tried to climb. She showed herself to him to make him mad. She sat this way in the branches and that way in the branches and she leaned out and down to him, stretching her arms.

Nogamin could not climb the tree. He could find no hold on the big rounded trunk. He sat down under the tree and cried for the girl. He cried, "O, you sit over there." He looked up at her. He cried to her, "O, come on, come on! You've got to come down to me!" Nogamin was out of his mind for that girl.

It was a little bit dark. Nogamin slept. He woke up and cried and called to that girl sitting in the branches of the tree. He slept and woke at the foot of the tree. And then at last, when Nogamin was asleep, the girl slipped down out of the tree and ran away.

Laughing, the girl ran back to the river Kimmul. There, lying out in the sun, on the sand near the young paper-bark trees with the river glittering past them, were all her sisters, the *murinbungo*, the water-lubras.

Nogamin woke up. It was little-bit daylight. He looked up and saw the arms of the bottle-tree bare against the stars. As soon as he could see, Nogamin began to follow the girl's tracks. All those girls lying along the river heard Nogamin coming. Weirk, the white cockatoo, rose screaming out of the high paper-bark trees. "Ah," the girls cried, "it might be that it is that man now who is frightening Weirk."

Nogamin came running. He saw all those girls lying out in the sun on the river sand. When the girls saw him coming they got up and dived in the water from all along the river bank. Nogamin was running down the bank to dive in after them when he saw their father, the Rainbow Snake Kunmanngur, rear up out of the water. In deep mud near the river bank Nogamin came to a stop. He cried out in a strange voice, "*Keir, Keir, ngier!*" He changed into the lotus-bird who runs over the broad floating leaves of the lilies crying out and looking for its food.

And the place where Nogamin tried to jump in the water is called Kiyerr, on the Fitzmaurice River. A stone is the dreaming of that man Nogamin whose spirit is now a bird. The womerah belonging to Wirreitman is the cypress-pine growing there, called Lakomin; the womerah of Nogamin is the Leichhardt pine, Pitji. The spear belonging to the girl is Woolgooboo and the spear of Nogamin is Oonjirri the jungle-tree.

Eleanor Smith

The Drover

HE was tall, about six foot two; lean and dark as an aborigine. He'd a big felt hat pushed back from his forehead, and a face lined by exposure to the sun and wind and by the laughter from his eyes.

His manner was quiet. His lazy lidded eyes missed nothing as he came into the hut. His bare feet were as hard as mulga—you'd swear he had boots on as he walked over to the fire. It was a joy to see him move; each motion easy and controlled. He lowered himself to the floor, resting his forearms on his knees; big, capable hands loosely clasped about them.

The men squatting or sitting around the fire looked up, nodded and went on yarning.

The drover listened but rarely entered the conversation, and if so, with a scarcity of words. He was amused and faintly sceptical of some of the yarns. Jake, a bit of a windbag, felt it, and resented it.

"Remember Mrs. Lobman," said old Perc. "A mystery that. Never did understand how she left those kids of hers. Fifteen of 'em!"

"He done her in," said the drover laconically.

"Oh come off it! How do you know!" Jake was spoiling for an argument.

"Jeezcrys. Course he did. Bad bloke." The drover leaned over and slowly extracted the makings from his pocket, rolled his cigarette and licked the paper. His forehead wrinkled up like a washing board as he neatened and poked at the ends.

His lazy eyes turned amusedly to Jake. His cigarette drooped from his lips. Striking a wax match on the sole of a foot as hard as the baked earth itself, he lit it, and stared into the fire. "He done her in all right," he said finally.

The drover's quiet manner infuriated Jake. The hotter he became the cooler the drover. But the men were tired and in no mood for an argument and soon there was silence.

Flicking his cigarette butt into the fire, the drover picked up the billy and set it on the coals. Then, with barely a nod, he walked to the door.

"And shut the bloody door when you go out," said Jake.

The drover glanced coolly, appraisingly at the speaker, then closed the door quietly after him.

"Funny bloke," said young Bill admiringly.

"Funny me foot," snarled Jake.

"He's a damn good drover," said Perc as he placed the billy more securely. "The only man I know who'd tackle the Canning stock route. It's a lousy track. Don't know any other cove who'd do it." His shrewd old eyes swept the stockmen and settled on Jake meaningfully. "He's a good bloke," he finished.

"He's too bloomin' quiet," said Jake, who was nettled at Perc's dig. He fancied himself as a drover. "He gets under my skin. He's *too* quiet."

"O.K. He's quiet. So what!" Perc was annoyed. These young upstarts thought they knew everything. "Like to see *you* with seven hundred head of cattle, your packhorses perished and *walking* back two hundred miles," he said.

"Jeez!" Barney the cook spat neatly into the fire. "Did he do that?"

"He did," said Perc.

"Where's he gone to? Doesn't he bunk here?"

"Over to the homestead I reckon . . ." Perc began.

"He's in with the nobs," sneered Jake.

"To see if he can rustle up a bit o' tucker, I reckon," finished Perc.

"He looks half starved," said Bill sympathetically.

"Did you see what he ate tonight?" Barney sounded aggrieved.

"Too busy trying to eat up the muck you dished us," said Jake.

Barney ignored this. "Fair dinkum," he said. "He ate as much as three men, and woulda had more but I eased him off. Jeez. He's hungry all right."

"So's his horses," said Jake.

"How long's he here for?"

"Till he and his nags are fit. He's been two months on the go already. Up from the south."

"How long does the Canning take?" asked Bill. He knew little about anything, having arrived at the station a week before.

"All depends. Three to four months . . . five maybe."

"Is that long? For the Canning, I mean?"

"Oh—average. You should see the bloody country though. Nothing but sandhills for miles. And hot! It's so hot the nails fall out of your boots."

The men laughed derisively.

"It's true what I'm telling you. Don't take any notice of them,

Bill. They're a lot of no hopers anyway. You listen to old Perc while you're here and you'll be jake."

"What about water?" Bill asked. At least he knew that that was the first consideration.

"There's water," said Perc, "if you know where to look for it. Government wells and rock holes; if they aren't dry or filled with sand. Sure there's water. But a helluva long way between."

"How old is he, Perc?"

"Who . . . the drover? 'Bout forty, I'd say. Maybe more. Met him at Hall's Creek in nineteen-thirty." Perc laughed at the memory. "He was celebrating . . . His twenty-first birthday."

"That makes him forty-one," corrected Jake.

"O.K.! O.K.! He's forty-one then," agreed Perc irritably.

"Is he married?"

"Not that I know of. Could be. Never can tell with those quiet coves. He wasn't when I met him at Hall's Creek. He holds his own whist," Perc looked meaningfully at Jake. "He's a quiet cove, it's the life he's led. So much on his own I reckon. But crikey—you should see him on a bender!" Perc hooted with delight. "He rip roared through the Creek on his twenty-first all right!" Perc's old eyes lit with delight at the thought of it, and then he lapsed into silence.

"He never got any letters," he said musingly. "Never got any. He'd come up to the post office—I was there at the time—and ask. But never got *any*. If he was sweet on someone he would've, wouldn't he? The women, two of 'em at the Creek, was crazy about him. He was a handsome bloke . . . still is, I reckon. But he was polite—and so far as I know, no funny business." Perc stared into the fire.

"When did he first go up the Canning?" asked Bill.

"'Bout fifteen years ago, I think." Perc fixed Jake with his eyes. "Or somewhere near that. I remember the day he got his orders. He come up to the post office and as usual, asked for mail. Well, there *was* a letter for him. I was mighty curious, but waited. He opened the letter, and then turned to me and says, 'Going up the Canning.'

"'Quite a distance,' says I.

"'Fair,' he says, then adds, 'With cattle.'

"'Just a holiday jaunt,' I says.

"'About it,' he says, and smiles. I haven't seen him since . . . till yesterday. But I'd know him anywhere. He's different."

"I'll say," said Jake scathingly.

"Don't think because he's quiet, he's harmless!" Perc chuckled and glanced at the men. "It don't do to get in his bad books, though he does seem easy going. I remember once on Bilarabee. There'd been

no meat for months, so he goes out after a killer. It was winter, and he'd been out all day without tucker—he never packs grub for a day. He gets back about nine-thirty at night, and goes to the kitchen to see what he can fossick up. Nothing. So he goes to the cook who's in bed and asks for some grub, and the cook tells him all hands are off. He picks up the poor coot by his singlet and chucks him on the floor and says, 'Your hands aren't, by jeez. I want some tucker.' And he got it." Perc cackled. "Better look out, Barney."

"What's he gone to the homestead for?" Bill inquired.

"P'raps he's been asked to sleep," Jake said sarcastically.

"He never sleeps," Perc announced. "I've camped with him and I know. He lies down by the fire and makes bloomin' tea all night. He's a terror for tea. His stores for the Canning are tea, flour, sugar and tobacco, and that's mostly for his mob. He lives off the country like an abo. Rides naked except for his hat, and lets his hair grow too; must have burnt it off with a fire-stick before he come in. Sleeps with his revolver strapped to his wrist—he's had both of 'em busted, and he's got a gammy leg into the bargain. Dragged by his night horse. But he's game. There's no one to touch him open broncho." Perc looked squarely at Jake. "And mickies as big as bulls 're just child's play to him. The Canning's a perisher all right, it's a long, lonely trek. Not a soul to talk to for months on end 'cept niggers. Nothing but sand, spinifex and sand, and sandhill. And at night, watering your cattle . . . and riding them. It's not right, it's too lonely. Always on the jump. You gotta be . . . just a jump ahead of trouble. No wonder the poor bastard never sleeps. Forgotten how to more'n likely." Old Perc stopped talking, and juggled the billy aside as it sputtered water.

The door opened and the drover walked quietly in. Picking up the billy, he set it back on the coals, sitting stockman fashion in front of it.

Young Bill cleared his throat. "Did you really walk two hundred miles?" he asked admiringly.

The drover turned his lazy lidded eyes and regarded the young man.

"Had to get home," he said, and smiled.

"Where *is* home?" Jake asked insolently.

"Jeezcrys . . . He's lost his way." The drover pinned Jake with cool hard eyes and the men laughed at Jake's discomfiture.

Throwing tea into the billy, the drover took it off the fire and set it on the hob.

"Any of you blokes want tea?" he asked.

"Too right!" they chorused.

Leisurely tapping the sides of the billy, he poured the tea slowly into his enamel cup.

"Help yourselves," he said.

He set the billy back on the hob, slowly, cup in hand, he walked across the room. He picked up a dusty old pillow and blanket, threw them down by the fire and settled for the night. His strange eyes stared over the brim of his cup at Jake; hot and black as the tea itself.



Married Quarrel

Regard those luckier lives
That skid or plod upon surfaces, embrace
Fictions or nullities, are hardly aware
Of how the deep sweet root of joy goes rotten
Under the false fact or the act without
Philosophy—light lives that never allow
The moths of misunderstanding and estrangement,
The moths of hate and fear (born of the mind
Within the mind, the shadow within the shadow),
To clog their sense with anguish.

Me you have dimmed and hollowed and diminished.
Me you have shown the meaning of old age,
The greyness of defeat, and the once-too-often
Plunging from peak to pit. Now there is nothing
Of good favour or savour; mists that are grained
Like harbour water with the fat moon's rays
Hold no enchantment; breezes bring no message;
The huge and singing dawn is mean and dumb.
Yet, though I pray "O let this grief dissolve
In some sublimer grief, or burn me dry
With idiot sunshine till I keep no sap
To feed the branch of sorrow, wash me with music,
Or with toil crush me"—still in my bitter heart
My balm is this: You suffer too, thank God.

Now with our terrible words,
 With silences tenfold more terrible,
 With many words and with denial of words,
 We each lay waste the other. Our wily hatred
 Presses and hits and cuts at every nerve
 Which love would always with a delicate knowledge
 Please and assuage. That knowledge, grown malignant,
 Rips at our inmost frailties. We have no screen
 Against these private evils, precise hurts,
 Most intimate betrayals, and no disguise
 Nor means of refuge. We are still at one,
 A double self-tormentor twined and twinned
 In the one system, grafted each to each.

JOHN THOMPSON

The Adventurers

This is their third parting. Now she goes
 Luminous-eyed and somewhat tragic, exalted
 By such addition to her sum of action,
 To tell her women friends. He promptly finds,
 With his accustomed aptitude, fresh love—
 Palm, lip, nipple, and satiny throat and reins
 Sleek as a skinned rabbit's—and grins, and shrugs,
 Copying forth the verses he keeps to hand
 For new seductions under his great grapevine
 Within his wall, where noon leopards the haunch
 And the neat belly, puts light where hollows curve,
 And sinks protuberances in limpid shadow.

Soon, encountering face to face in a café—
 She with her curled hat-feather and eyelashes,
 He with his ice-cold incandescent eye—
 They nonchalantly speak of petty things,
 The headlines and the weather, slightly hinting
 A light disdain for each other's romps and rorts
 Now grown the sudden scandal of the city.

They bid Goodbye: then, two days later, meet
More privately, by accident. One week more,
They slap each other's cheeks in Martin Place
And straightway their artesian passion jets
Anew. Oh never have there been such bores.

Now is the height and hurricane of their love.
Now do they beat and burn each other. Now
To all the world they telephone their jars
And jealousies, their stratagems and revenges.
Help, help! they cry. And rapidly, on the thrust
And thunderhead of the vehement commotion
Of their distraught advisers, pleaders, plotters
And partisans, they feel themselves up-borne.
They swear that they will leap together, locked
And coupled, from a rooftop or a mountain;
May even marry; or may part forever;
Or must be false—they are at once—to win
A mutual freedom; must resort to liquor—
They do, immediately—to defeat remorse.
Oh now they are most active, most alive,
Most glorified, most potent, and most happy,
Though suddenly neglectful of one another.

JOHN THOMPSON

Sydney Ophelias

Ophelia, given the answer, called the wind,
Scattered her senses, breathed her bawdy songs,
Instilled remorse and floated to her true mind.

If she had Shakespeare lend her words to say
Any sad girl would do so: gracefully
Use such reproaches for all who would love betray.

And the harbour would be scattered as if with flowers
Bearing drowned girls; the beaches would be filled with songs
From crazy throats invoking Bedlam's powers.

For Sydney has green water enough to drown all sadness
But no one to teach death gently or beautifully,
And the hard streets glitter with the dry masks of madness;

While Ophelias, lacking the borrowed genius to become pathetic
whores,
Accumulate sorrows in the manner of ill-used pack animals
With hard mouths and chronic saddle-sores.

NANCY KEEsing

To the Poetry of Kenneth Slessor

Dumb fumbler at the window-pane,
Your drowned voice sounds far undersea
Like traffic, bells—a fluid pain
Poured in walled ears, a poetry

That slits the tongues of stubborn words
Time and tired journalists deface,
And makes them sing like lyrebirds
And song give back the human voice:

Small words like worlds of musket-shot,
Words whose gilt mirrors frame our pleasures,
Words fine as hairs, numbed words that clot—
You calculate by weights and measures,

Then fish stray captains from their beds,
From smells of turnip-soup in galleys,
And front us with their formal beards,
Their rigid minds like bowling-alleys.

From tight-rope, tenement and tram
You mock with fierce humility,
Yet take our frailties by the arm
And scour our linen in the sea—

The sea that like a mistress sleeps
Beyond the pane, behind the ears,
And smiles with scornful timeless lips,
O blind man shouting through her tears!

DAVID CAMPBELL

To the Art of Edgar Degas

Beachcomber on the shores of tears
Limning the gestures of defeat—
Horses and whores and opera-stars—
The lonely, lighted, various street

You sauntered through, oblique, perverse,
In your home territory a spy,
Accosted you and with a curse
You froze it with your Gorgon's eye.

With what tense patience you refine
The everyness of everyday
And with sweet colour and a line
Make mysteries of flaccid clay!

By what strange enterprise you live!
Edgy, insatiably alone,
You choose your tenderness to give
To showgirls whom you turn to stone—

But stone that moves, tired stone that leans
To ease involuntarily the toe
Of ballet-girls like watering-cans
(Those arguers at the bar) as though

In their brief pause you found relief
From posed dilemmas of the mind—
Your grudging aristocratic grief,
The wildcat cares of going blind.

Well, walk your evening streets and look
Each last eleven at the show:
The darkening pleasures you forsook
Look back like burning windows now.

DAVID CAMPBELL

Beggars

Lear and blind Oedipus
Play with birds and butterflies.
Naked we come and go
Under the terrible skies.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

He has luck who can
Follow temperate streams of blood
Through a chequered fallow land
And where his father stood,
Leave his shadow on the plan;

Blessed if beneath
The grey towers of the mind
Dreaming where the coloured light
Weaves its web, he find
Satisfaction for his death.

Yet with wind and rain
Butterflies and beggars ride;
A lightning cleaves the heart
And there is so much pride
They must seek their death again.

DAVID CAMPBELL

John Hetherington

A Café in Athens

SUMMER had come early that year. Snow still lay deep on the ridges of the northern mountains, but already in Athens the March days pulsed with heat. Many of the men taking the early afternoon sunshine in Stadium Street were coatless; the women wore light frocks, and most of them were bare-legged. You would have thought that war was far away, except for the occasional army truck that rumbled past or the sight of a knot of strolling soldiers, British, Australian, New Zealand, or Greek.

We turned down a side street. Its cobbled road surface was empty for the moment of wheeled traffic or pedestrians.

"Let's try this joint," said Harry, the infantry corporal.

He headed across the sidewalk toward a single-fronted shop, with the name *Café Wavell* painted on the window. The lettering was newly done. I guessed the café owner had adopted the name in hurried tribute to the British commander-in-chief. The window was empty but for a sad aspidistra in a red earthenware pot and two paper flags pasted inside the glass; one was a Union Jack, the other the blue-and-white flag of Greece.

We went through the tinkling curtain of beaded strings that masked the doorway. The air was cooler inside, though still warm, and the subdued light was soothing after the sun's glare.

The café was no more than a long narrow room, with a row of marble-topped tables and straight-backed wooden chairs set along one wall. There was a high marble-topped counter at the far end. The counter supported a tall nickel coffee urn, a bewildering mechanism of taps and intertwined pipes, and behind the counter there were wall shelves holding bottles. Harry and I sat down at a table, facing one another. I took off my cap and slid it under the chair, and Harry pushed his digger hat to the back of his head. Sweat glinted in the shallow gutter across his forehead where the band of the hat had rested. His throat under the open-necked shirt, and his arms below the rolled shirtsleeves were burned a strong shade of luminous brown.

A waiter came towards us from behind the counter. He moved without haste, limping almost imperceptibly. He halted beside our table, a small desiccated man, wearing a black lustre coat, dark trousers, a whitish shirt, and a floppy black bow tie. He was narrow-shouldered, and his veined brown hands had large knuckles. Strands of dark hair, greying, had been carefully brushed across his bald scalp.

"Coffee?" he asked.

"Yeah," Harry said. "Coffee, an' . . . You talk English?"

The waiter nodded.

"All right," said Harry. "An' some of that rotgut you call . . . What d'y' call that stuff that tastes like aniseed?"

"Ouzo," said the waiter.

"Ouzo," said Harry. "Two ouzos."

The waiter walked at the same unhurried gait to the back of the café. He fetched two small cups and saucers from below the counter and ran coffee into them from the urn, then reached a bottle from the shelves behind him and measured colourless liquid from it into two glasses. He returned to us, carrying the cups of coffee and the glasses on a tray; each of the glasses held an inch or so of the colourless liquid. He set the cups and glasses before us, but did not move away.

I tasted my coffee. It was a species of Turkish coffee, strong and hot and richly sweet.

"O.K.?" he asked.

"O.K.," said Harry. "What do I owe you?" It was his turn to shout.

The waiter told him, and Harry passed him some money. The waiter was turning away, when Harry asked him, "Where'd you learn English, sport?"

The waiter came back. "The States."

"You there long?"

"About fifteen year."

"Why'd you come back here?" Harry was one of those men with an insatiable curiosity about everybody they chance to meet.

"I wan'ed t' see my family."

"Why didn't you take them to America?"

The waiter smiled for the first time. "No money," he said. "I always reckoned t'make enough for their fares, but I never got a bank." He shrugged. "I liked the States."

Harry asked, "What's your name?"

"Paul," the waiter said.

"All right, Paul," said Harry. "Have a drink with us."

"I'll take coffee," Paul said. "Can't drink that other stuff these days." He pointed at his stomach, with a comical gesture of distaste. "Maybe I drunk too much hard liquor when I was a young fella!"

He went to the counter and drew himself a small cup of coffee and walked back to our table with it. Harry solemnly handed him a ten-drachmae note. Paul slipped it into his trousers pocket.

"Good luck," he said, and sipped his coffee. Then: "You guys Australians?"

"Yes," said Harry. "Don't you like Australians?"

Paul smiled with his dark eyes. "Sure," he said. "I like ever'body. Most fellas is about the same once you get t'know them. That's what I find."

"You like Germans?" Harry asked. "An' Eyeties?"

"Eyeties?"

"Italians," Harry said. "Dagoes, wops!"

"I like 'em all right," Paul said. "There's good an' bad ever'where."

"What about Mussolini?" Harry chipped.

"—— Mussolini," Paul said, but without rancour. "Didn' I say there's good an' bad ever'where!"

"The Eyeties are giving you blokes some hurry-up, anyway," Harry said. Harry liked starting arguments. I could see he was trying to pick an argument with Paul, and I could also see he did not have a chance of doing it.

Paul grinned. "No, they ain't," he said. "Italian soldier no goddam good!"

He knew what he was talking about. The Italians had invaded Greece five months earlier, expecting to be in Athens in a week. They were farther from Athens now than they had been at the beginning; everybody knew the Germans would have to get them out of trouble. I could see that Paul knew it.

"What about Hitler?" Harry persisted.

Paul shrugged. "If Hitler come . . . finish!" he said.

"Don't forget we're here," Harry replied, cocky.

"Not enougha you," Paul said. "She'll all be over pretty quick."

Harry sipped his ouzo, and Paul said, "You drink that stuff straight?"

"You bet," said Harry. "I like my liquor straight."

"She's dynamite, you know, that ouzo," Paul told him. He glanced at me. "You take water with yours, eh?"

"Thanks," I said. He tipped water into my glass from the carafe on the table. The colourless liquid turned milky as the water hit it.

"What kinda country's Australia?" he asked.

"Pretty good," I told him, thinking of the long yellow beaches and the drab-green of the plains and the harsh distances.

"Like the States?"

"A lot less people, but big like the States. We've got some Greeks there."

"I had a cousin went there, long time back. Town named Perth, I think," Paul said. "We never heard of him again. . . . I might go t'Australia when the goddam war's over."

"There's plenty of room for you," Harry said. "You could bring your café with you."

"Isn't my café," Paul said. "She belong t' one my boys. I'm just looking after her. . . . You like more coffee or something?"

We said no. We'd only come into the café to dodge the heat for a while. We left him, saying we would come back again next time we were round that way, but I suppose neither of us ever did intend to go back. And that was the odd part of it. Talking to Paul, I had felt we were just killing time, the way men in uniform do in the inactive periods of a war. But later I found myself thinking about Paul. He hadn't said much, but there were things locked away inside him that I wanted to know about. In that, he was like Greece itself: there was more to him than appeared on the surface.

Harry's unit moved north a day or two later. The Intelligence people reckoned the Germans would attack in the early days of April, and the British, Australian and New Zealand troops had to take up their positions in the mountains. As a correspondent, I was not allowed to go forward then, and I had to kick my heels in Athens for a while. So on my second visit to the Café Wavell I went alone.

There were three other customers this time, Greek civilians. They were grouped around one of the tables, with drinks in front of them, arguing intensely in their own tongue, which I did not understand. Paul was sitting on a high stool behind the counter, reading a newspaper, but as soon as I sat down he came out from behind the counter and walked over to my table.

"Hello," he said.

"You remember me?"

"Sure! You was in here that other time with the other Australian fella. . . . Coffee?"

I said yes, and invited him to join me. He fetched coffee for both of us, but he would not sit down: he stood by the table sipping from his cup.

"You still reckon it's all up if Hitler attacks?" I asked him.

He nodded. "The Huns got too many men, too many guns, too many aeroplane."

"What happens to Greece then?"

He shrugged. "What happens t' Greece'll be pretty bad," he said. "I mean, for people like me, all the poor people."

"How about the others?"

"They all right," he said. "The big people always all right. . . . It's always the little guy has it hard."

"How about the Government?"

"The Gov'ment get out fast, soon as there's trouble. You watch!"

"You're a bit of a Bolshie," I said, laughing.

"Not me!" Paul said. "Bolshies, fascists, socialists, liberals, all the lot of 'em, they all the same. They just men, an' . . . well, men look after their own skins, don' they?"

We talked a while longer, and then I left. Most of the things we talked about I have forgotten now. I told Paul I'd be in to see him next day or the day after, but as it turned out I was unable to keep my promise, because the Army decided that the correspondents could go forward at last, and two days later I was in the shadow of Mount Olympus.

I did not think much about Paul in the next ten days or so. The German attack began in the first week of April, and even the events of the first days resolved any doubts I might have held about Paul's military acumen: it was soon plain that our forces were fighting merely a delaying action, making nothing but a gesture which must end in total defeat. Oh, yes, I did think of Paul once or twice. As we fell back, I remembered his words: *It's always the little guy has it hard!* I knew it would not be long, at this rate, before the little guys of Greece were having it hard.

We had fallen back to somewhere south of Elasson when I had to go back to Athens. My reports of the fighting had been going to Athens by road, to be censored and put on the cable there. Now some blockage had developed at the cable office; my messages were not getting away. A personal call was needed to straighten out the trouble. I reached Athens after midnight. I slept in a hotel bed that night and went round to the cable office next morning. The cable supervisor was helpful, and the snag that had caused the bother was removed in ten minutes. I went out into the street, and I decided that I'd call on Paul before going back to the line.

It was only about ten o'clock, but the Café Wavell was open for business. I went in through the bead curtain, and stood blinking in

the softened light. Paul came toward me from the back of the café; there was pleasure on his normally immobile face.

"This is good," he said.

He brought coffee and ouzo—ouzo at ten in the morning! This time he sat down, on a chair across the table from me, and when I offered him money for the coffee and drinks he waved it away with a gesture almost fierce.

"You been at the fighting?" he asked.

I told him what I had to tell. It must have been cheerless news for him, but his calm face registered nothing. At the end, he nodded slowly, his lips pursing.

"Well," he said. "I guess it had t'be!"

"What about you?" I asked. "Another week or so, and they'll be in Athens. Are you going to hang on here?"

"What else!" he shrugged. "Where do I go, if I don't stay in Athens?"

I could not answer that. It was something I had never thought out. The troops would have their chance of getting out and staying free: many of them would go in the bag, but at least they would have their chance. There would be nothing for the Greeks, nothing anyway for "the little guys" like Paul, but to stay behind and endure whatever might come.

"Can't you do anything?" I asked. Even at the time I knew it was an inane question, but I felt I must say something.

"No," he said. "I got a family, remember!"

Paul had mentioned his family before, in an offhand way, but I had never somehow thought of him as a family man. To me, he seemed to have no being beyond this drab café, with its tables and chairs, its high marble-topped counter, its nickel coffee urn, and its shelved bottles.

"I don't mind so much," he said. "I been through it before, y'know. Look!" He pushed out his right leg and eased the trousers up, baring the calf of the leg above the black cotton sock. The column of flesh and bone was hardly thicker than my wrist: the muscle part had been violently carved away, and all that remained was an ugly whitish scar, deeply indented. I understood now the cause of the almost imperceptible limp when he walked. "The other war," Paul said. "I got a few more, but she's the best."

I knew I must not delay any longer. The car that would take me north was waiting at the hotel I had slept in the night before. I told Paul I must go.

"O.K.," he said. "I hope I see y' again some time!"

I hoped I should see him, too, but I doubted my chances of doing so. Anything might happen in the days ahead. The best that any man could hope for would be to escape from Greece before the German grip had tightened over the land and its people.

But I did see Paul once more. The fighting was all but over then. The British and the Anzacs were still on their feet, working their way back to the evacuation beaches of the Peloponnese; but the defeat inflicted by superior numbers and more powerful arms was in its last bitter phase. The end was a question of two or three days, at most. I had been ordered back to Athens and told to make my way out from there, if I could; if I should fail, then to strike southward, for the evacuation beaches, and take my chance of getting there in time to find room in a Royal Navy ship.

Athens was a sorrowful city. There was a kind of waiting stillness over it, because the people knew that hope was ended. They had lived for weeks in a frenzy of alternating hope and despair, but they knew there could be no escape now. The sunshine was no less brilliant, but it no longer warmed you, and the streets were pretty well deserted most of the time. The patriotic flags had disappeared, and even the fervent posters depicting Hitler with blood-reddened hands, had been torn down—whether by German sympathisers or by the frightened men and women of Athens I never knew. If they were frightened you could not blame them. There would be hard times ahead of them, anyway; they would have been fools to exasperate the Germans to no purpose.

A small ship was leaving the Piraeus, which is the port of Athens, that night. She was an Aegean islands freighter in peacetime, and her name was *Elsie*. The *Elsie* was already loaded with troops and a few British civilians far beyond the limits of safety, but I was told I could go along in her if I was on board by ten o'clock. At least, I could go if the *Elsie* was still afloat and the harbour had not been demolished in the meantime. The German bomber fleets, unopposed now, were making a resolute effort to blow the harbour and every vessel moored in it to glory.

There were still some hours to nightfall and, on impulse, I decided to pay a farewell call on Paul. I went along Stadium Street in the sunshine. As I neared the side street in which the Café Wavell stood a bomber formation came whooping across the city towards the Piraeus. A minute or two later I heard the rumble of their bombs, and I hoped—selfishly, of course—that the *Elsie* had not been hit.

I half-expected the Café Wavell to be closed; many of the Athens

shops had put up their shutters, almost as if they were making an act of mourning; but the door was open, and when I went through the bead curtain somebody stirred behind the counter, and I saw it was Paul. He came forward, walking with his almost imperceptible limp. His face looked a little greyer, the lines about his mouth were tighter, the eyes were tired.

"Coffee?" he asked.

I nodded, and he went back to the counter and presently returned with a cup of coffee. He set the cup on the marble-topped table.

Then he said, "She's a sad day for Greece!" I knew he did not mean just that day, but all the days that were to come.

"Yes," I said. There seemed nothing else to say. The time when words could hold any comfort for him had passed.

He dusted the table-top with his napkin, in the age-old way of waiters.

"I'm bothered about my sons," he said.

I don't know why we had never spoken of his sons before. I should have known they would be fighting. Every man in Greece who could carry a rifle had been fighting for months. It just had never occurred to me to draw Paul on the subject of his own sons.

"T'ree of them," he said. "They all with the army. I haven't heard nothing in weeks."

I understood now why his face was grey and taut.

The consolations you can offer a man at such a time are never more than commonplace. They are better left unspoken. I could think of nothing but a cigarette. I gave him one and took one myself, and we lit them and smoked, with no words to speak.

Paul's cigarette was half-smoked when he looked down at it, tapped the ash from the end and said, "She ain't over yet, y'know!"

"The fighting?"

He nodded. "We go on fighting! Here, Crete, any place else we can! The Greeks is plenty tough people."

I knew this was not a despairing boast. I knew that Paul meant it, and that it was true.

I stood up.

"You go?" he asked.

"I hope so. There's a ship leaving the Piraeus tonight. If I miss out, then I'll go south and try my luck there."

We shook hands, and he smiled for the first time since I had come into the café. He clapped me on the shoulder and wished me luck. I went out through the bead curtain, and I was walking away up the

quiet side street when I heard him calling after me. He waved from the doorway.

"When the British return you come an' take coffee with me, eh? Remember Paul!"

I waved and turned and hurried on, thinking that the courage of the unheroic is the most sublime courage of all.

In South-East Asia

Secure in leaves, the lovely trees
Lean from their height upon the square
The sentries idle; everywhere
Soft winds pass and are renewed:
Revolving fans on balconies

Are silent presences; and men
From darkness watch the warmhearted night:
Naked, the rickshaw coolies squat
Gambling in quiet colloquy
By cabaret and opium den

Echoes of mortars from the plains
Disturb the city; and the blood
Moves strangely through its moving wood
Who walks the streets tonight discovers
Obscure conjectures in his veins

He treads along some borderline
Where complicated loyalties stand
In ambush at his either hand:
Questions hidden in the dark
Wait for his unconscious sign

And ill-defined uncertainties
Haunt the minatory leaves,
And houses are unlit; and love's
Absence is a breathing wind
Inhabiting the soft-fledged trees.

Gavin Long

The Volunteers

Extract from *To Benghazi*

PERPLEXING questions faced the young Australian in the last months of 1939. If he enlisted in the "special" force would it ever leave Australia, or would it remain on garrison duty—a dreary prospect for those adventurous spirits who would leap at the chance of oversea service? Were armies outdated and would the war be "won by machines"? The Labour Party, which in 1914 had backed the dispatch of an expeditionary force, now opposed it, and about half the population supported that party and listened attentively to its leaders. The Government had shown itself to be hesitant about raising a force free to go overseas, and had placed difficulties in the way of the enlistment of fully-experienced artisans and certain professional men. The call to the militia, in which had assembled 80,000 of the keenest citizens, was particularly faint. They were being asked to leave units they knew, and incidentally to accept lower pay in a force which might not offer even the adventure of foreign service. In some militia units officers who had either not volunteered or not been chosen for the special force were advising the men not to join it, saying that if they wished to serve abroad they would probably go just as soon if they remained in their own units.

There were no brass bands and no banners to lead men to the recruiting offices, but rather a series of obstacles to be overcome. One man who had driven from west of the Darling River in New South Wales to enlist at the nearest recruiting office, later wrote his recollections of the day.

Coonamble had not been thrown off its balance by the war, or by the fact that men were arriving to enlist there. Bill and I strolled round the town and eventually and inevitably came to rest in a stock and station agent's office. Coonamble abounds in such offices, so we were able to pick and choose, and the night wore on with talk about the rain, the flies and the wool prices. Just a home from home.

There was not a throng at the Town Hall next morning at 10 o'clock.

But I met a man who had driven in to enlist, was desperately keen to get in but feared he wouldn't be accepted. By this time the general atmosphere of unconcern, the Prime Minister's speeches telling everyone to carry on, and the decidedly "carry-on" attitude of most of the people I met, had had its effect on me. At Walgett, when Bill said I was going in to enlist, the response was such that I began to imagine people looking at me with a surprised air. In Coonamble Bob's girl had raised her eyebrows and said "But why?" I was beginning to feel half-hearted about it when I met this man who, although barred from enlistment by the fact that he was married and had two children, and by virtue of his occupation also, intended to scheme his way into what he described as "the best life you can get".

Eventually the Town Hall opened for business. A handful of men of all descriptions was waiting outside. When the time arrived I went through the door into a long and sombre hall, in the centre of which two men sat at a long table. One of them was in uniform and the other in plain clothes. As the civilian was talking to a prospective soldier, I approached the man in uniform.

"Name?" he asked. "Age?" "Twenty-nine." "Occupation?" "Overseer." The military man gave a quick look at the man opposite and then at me. "Don't speak so loud," he said. "Do you want to join this army?" "Well, I'm not a fanatic, but I've come a long way. Yes, I suppose I do."

"Well, you're in a reserved occupation. If you want to get in, you'd better give your occupation as something else." He spoke in a low voice so that the man in plain clothes did not hear.

"I don't want to be hauled up for perjury. What is this force likely to do?"

"You'll probably go to Singapore," replied the officer. "I can assure you that this will be the best force that they will form—best equipped and trained. I'd have a go at it if I were you. Later on you might be dragged into a show not half so good."

"Put my occupation down as a bookkeeper," I said.

"Right. Now, any wounds or scars?" And so on, until he finished with me, and I and the partly-filled-in forms went over to the solemn figure across the table.

"Umm, bookkeeper, eh?" he said. "How many work on the place?"

"About sixteen."

"What does the executive staff consist of?"

"There is a manager in charge."

"Is he always there?"

"Most times."

"Does he know you are here today, and why you have come?"

So the cross-questioning went on. I was determined not to tell a deliberate lie, and we both sparred with words. Then the manpower officer blinked behind his spectacles, held his pencil poised above the sheet for a few seconds in visible uncertainty. He turned the sheet over.

On the left top corner were the words "Reserved Occupation" and a blank, and on the right top corner the words "Not Reserved" and another blank. Suddenly decisive, he moved, and put a cross in the right-hand space.

"Mind you," he said, "this will possibly be altered, and you have to pass the medical test."

"When will I know for certain?"

"Within a week. You will get a notice informing you one way or the other."

"Well, can I get my medical test over? I've got 170 miles to go and it looks like rain."

Indeed only the most resolute or the most carefree were likely to surmount official barriers and public indifference; yet those obstructions had the effect not only of selecting a force of splendid soldiers in the making, but, when reinforced by a conviction (which seems to have been fairly general) that the people as a whole were not greatly interested in their fate, of deeply influencing the character of the force, and, by accident, breeding a sense of superiority which it never lost. What kind of men enlisted? Were they adventurers, or those brought up in an ardent loyalty to England now threatened by an old enemy, or men bored by humdrum lives, or (as was soon charged against them) the unemployed and unskilled in search of occupation—or some of each of these?

A hundred years from today, when Australia has produced a strongly-flowing native culture, and absorption in the affairs of east Asia and the Pacific have made Europe seem more remote, a later generation may be at a loss to understand why Australians (and New Zealanders) volunteered so readily for service half a world away. Nine out of ten of the recruits had been born in Australia of Australian parents, were intensely proud of their national independence and would have fought for it against all comers. But national character forms slowly, and although the Australian had already acquired a temperament, a manner of speech and a physical appearance that distinguished him from the people of the United Kingdom, and, like other Dominion peoples, had acquired attitudes and habits of thinking that often made the colonial as irritating to the Englishman as the Englishman was puzzling to the colonial, all shared a common culture. In childhood both Englishman and colonial had listened to the same rhymes and legends, read the same books, sung the same songs. The Australian ate plum pudding on Christmas Day, honoured the King, knew the dates of the Norman Conquest, Magna Carta, Trafalgar and Waterloo, and played English games. His

books and his theatre came mostly from England. Thence was still drawn a strong contingent of his intellectual and spiritual leaders, and his own scholars sought post-graduate training and experience there. Economic interdependence fostered personal and sentimental links. The resentments and jealousies engendered by knowledge of Britain's considerable financial domination of Australian industry, of Australian public indebtedness to Britain and Britain's cultural authority were weak in comparison with the ties of cherished sentiments.

Reinforcing this common culture was the powerful tradition of the Australian Imperial Force of twenty years before. So high was the prestige of that volunteer army that a desire to qualify for membership of its brotherhood and to march on Anzac Day was to some a strong motive for enlistment. Some men said that they enlisted to escape from uninteresting occupations, dull towns or suburbs, or domestic difficulties—in fact, desire for self-enhancement was undoubtedly powerful in a colonial community where men were often less firmly tied to home than in the old world and were habitually on the alert for better opportunities in distant places. But the chronicler who follows these men through their training and campaigns must reach the conclusion that most of them were conscious of a peculiarly compelling duty towards the State and their fellow men. One of the new recruits (unable to define exactly why he himself had joined) questioned his companions but found all too shy or reserved to confess a serious reason for enlisting. Finally he decided:

The men who joined the army were the type who stood up in trams and gave their seats to women. There are people who are constitutionally unable to resist when a call is made, or when they feel they are under some obligation. I doubt whether many of them could tell why they enlisted. The real cause was something deeper than they could fathom. We could not see ourselves as fitting the glowing words of Masefield about the Anzacs at Gallipoli, and, although we were born with a tradition to carry on, and were proud of it, we were only too ready to admit that we were a ragtime army—though woe betide the militia or the civilian who suggested that. There was, I believe, a large body of men—perhaps the majority—who were adventurers at heart but common citizens by force of circumstance—how many of us are not—who saw in this call a glorious combination—the life of an adventurer with the duties of a citizen.

Events were to prove that the division enlisted under these conditions was to contain among its twenty thousand enough potential leaders to officer from top to bottom a force five times as large.

The average age was higher than was expected, a circumstance attributed by some observers partly to the trade depression of the early thirties and partly to the confused pacifism of the period between the wars. These had produced a corrosive disillusionment among many of those youths whose characters were shaped in those years and made them cynical to appeals to patriotism. What did they owe to a State that had abandoned them to unemployment in the depression? And in their school days it had been the fashion to teach that wars were the futile outcome of conspiracy between dishonest politicians, soldiers and armament manufacturers—"butchers" and "merchants of death"—and that patriotism was an evil emotion. "Almost all contemporary left-wing writers of this generation and the last attacked the idea of nationalism," wrote Rebecca West, after the war. "It was true that many of these attacks were made under the delusion that the words nationalism and imperialism mean the same thing, whereas nationalism—which means simply the special devotion of a people to its own material and spiritual achievements—implies no desire for the annexation of other territories and the enslavement of other peoples. But a great many of these attacks were made under no such apprehension. It was genuinely felt that it was pure superstition which requires a man to feel any warmer emotion about his own land, race and people than about any other. Why then should any man feel a lump in his throat when he saw his flag . . . or feel that in a dispute between his people and another he must obey the will of his kin and not aid their enemy?"

There had been enthusiasm among the intellectuals of the left-wing in politics in Australia as in England for the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War; that conflict exerted a special appeal to young men shaped by the depression and anti-militarist teaching, to whom it was presented as a war of radicals against "the Generals", and thus appealed to sympathetic readers of both Lenin and Erich Maria Remarque. But the Munich Agreement, the defeat of the Republicans in Spain and the pact between Russia and Germany had disillusioned and bewildered such people, and they returned to the attitudes of four years before. A majority of the leaders of this group stood aside from the struggle in places where they could wait and see how it developed. There can be no doubt that these influences, though less strong relatively in Australia than in England, reduced the number of youthful volunteers in 1939 and 1940, and caused the proportion of men in their thirties and early forties in the A.I.F. of those years to be relatively high.

By imperceptible stages the civilians became soldiers. In later years

the problems that then enmeshed them seemed comical. There were men who, after days in camp, did not know that they now possessed army numbers. "It is understood," said a routine order of early November, "that there are men in this camp who have not yet enlisted." But gradually, acting corporals and acting sergeants were selected; army routine and ritual ceased to be a mystery, and the elements of drill and musketry were learnt. A cotton overall working dress and a crumpled hat of the same material were distributed, which the troops named the "giggle suit" because it seemed to them to resemble the uniform of the inmates of a lunatic asylum; next came the loose-fitting battle-dress—tunic, trousers and cloth gaiters. The diarist of the 16th Brigade, which was the first to receive rifles and machine-guns, wrote after three weeks that "a straggly nondescript body of men had developed into a compact unit". Eagerly the men awaited a decision whether they would be sent abroad and when.

In the meantime, even before the men were in uniform, a strong pride—a "defiant pride" one diarist called it—had begun to develop in the new force, stimulated by the coolness which arose between the A.I.F. and the militia and, perversely, by the widespread conviction among men of the A.I.F. that the public believed that the force was composed of the rag-tag and bobtail of the people. Several men of the 16th Brigade have recorded their surprise, when the brigade marched through the streets of Sydney on 4th January, to find the streets lined with cheering people, and to read in the newspapers next day flattering comparisons between the men of the new and the old A.I.F.

The long khaki-clad columns [wrote the *Sydney Morning Herald*] thrilled the heart of Sydney as it had not been thrilled for a quarter of a century, since that still spring day in 1914 when the First A.I.F. marched through the same streets on its way to Anzac and imperishable glory . . . the marching was magnificent.

In respect of the quality of the men and of its growing self-esteem the comparisons were justified; in addition the division was slowly gaining in numbers and experience. At the end of November the 16th Brigade had reached 96 per cent of its full strength, although there was still a considerable shortage of officers. Groups of young leaders attended schools and returned from them with higher standards of skill and discipline which they in their turn helped to impart to their units. The opinion of the divisional staff was that, at this stage, the 16th Brigade had reached "a reasonable standard of platoon training". "The standard of efficiency of officers was generally the

chief weakness.... The material in the ranks was good and reasonably well trained and further progress depended on the capacity of officers."

On 9th January the men who had straggled up the road into Ingleburn in the early days of November, wearing civilian clothes and carrying their possessions in bundles and suit-cases, marched down that road again, uniformed, in threes, keeping step, proud and excited. Their final destination was a well-kept secret—perhaps Singapore, perhaps India, Egypt, Palestine or England—but the fact that the first large body of the Second A.I.F. was about to embark was widely known. As the troop trains travelled through the suburbs housewives waved, and when the liners in which the men were to embark moved into the harbour the foreshores were crowded with onlookers.

The 16th Brigade group embarked in the liners *Otranto*, *Orcades*, *Orford* and *Strathnaver*, none of which had been fully converted into troopships so they still contained some of the luxuries of peace, and each carried only 1,300 to 1,600 soldiers, not many more than their normal complement of passengers.

At 10 o'clock that morning the *Otranto* and the *Orcades* steamed under the Sydney Harbour Bridge to moorings in the outer harbour, while tugs, ferries, little coasters and even railway engines ashore sounded cock-crows on their sirens. Next morning the four transports moved out of the harbour past the battleship *Ramillies* which was to be part of their escort, while the men crowded rails and rigging gazing with sentiment at the disappearing city. At 3 p.m., out of sight of land, they joined six other transports containing the 4th New Zealand Brigade. With *Ramillies* leading, the cruiser *Canberra* on one flank and *Australia* on the other the convoy steamed south.

Outside Port Phillip Bay on 12th January the *Empress of Japan*, carrying part of divisional headquarters, some base troops and others, joined the convoy. At Fremantle all were given leave and crowded Perth for a last uproarious night in Australia. The convoy sailed from Fremantle soon after midday on the 20th. On some transports the men themselves were still uncertain where they were going, but, the day before the ships reached Fremantle, the German radio had announced that they were on the way to Suez.

Philip Dörter

A Prevalence of Snakes

THE C.O. of No. — Radar Station, R.A.A.F., leaned back in his canvas chair and contemplated the hairs of his naked, sweating stomach. A young man, commissioned barely six months ago and holding the probationary rank of pilot-officer, he was not given greatly to worrying, but he had a feeling of unease—a sense of something left undone, or a premonition of troubles to come.

He shifted in his chair to unstick his buttocks from the sweat-soaked canvas, and, one by one, dismissed as properly and safely dealt with any possible sources of trouble. Then he glanced across the tent to where the orderly-room corporal was filing correspondence. The corp. was short and dumpy, and the sweat on his naked back gathered and ran into a little trickle that coursed steadily down his spine to a little spreading pool on the stool.

"Everything O.K., Bill?" the C.O. asked him.

The corp. turned round and blinked through his spectacles. He looked like a fat little Buddha, and seemed mildly surprised by the question. "I think so," he said. "All the returns are in; there's nothing outstanding." He continued to blink as though expecting further questions.

The C.O. marvelled at the corp.'s roll of belly fat. "Y' know," he idled, "I've been wondering if we shouldn't wear a bit more clothing. Regulations say shorts and shirts for this area; p'raps we should wear shorts, anyway."

The corp. considered the idea and shook his head. "Too bloody hot," he said. "It's a hundred and twenty-one today; it was a hundred and nineteen yesterday; and it's been over a hundred every day for the last two months. And it's a waste of time, anyway. If you wear 'em you've got to wash 'em. So long as they wear boots for snakes and hats for the sun I wouldn't worry. I don't think you could make 'em wear anything, anyway."

The C.O. wondered if he could make them. So far he'd never found it necessary to give an order, and, with a wisdom that came early, he

was not keen to give any unless and until it was really necessary. His men had gradually discarded their clothing after the first couple of months in the area; he had held out for a while in shorts himself, but had finally followed the apparently sensible example of the rest.

"You're probably right," he said to the corp., getting up and reaching for his sun-helmet. "I think I'll take a stretch."

The corp. watched him go, smiling slightly at the slim boyish figure covered only with heavy boots at one end and a helmet at the other.

Outside, the C.O. stopped, narrowing his eyes against the heat and glare, and looked around his unit—fifteen tents sprawled in a small sandy clearing in the spinifex. Their only connection with the outside world was the snaking, dusty track which led ten miles through the spinifex to the airstrip. Beyond the airstrip the spinifex rolled on again in a grey-green mat to the horizon and the infinite spaces between them and civilisation.

The C.O. brought his eyes and mind back from space and civilisation and home, and walked down to the motors. One was idle in reserve, while the other throbbed its power to the spinning generator; the current from the generator was carried up the hill by power-lines to the doover itself—transmitter and receiver in a darkened tent with the great rectangular aerial on top. The transmitter poured out its beam of high-frequency waves through the slowly-turning aerial; if the waves struck an aircraft a tiny, telltale echo sped back to the aerial and showed itself as a small green blip on the screen on the receiver.

Satisfied with the motors, the C.O. followed the current up the hill to the doover, picking his way across the hot rocks and avoiding the clumps of spinifex which often enough harboured a sluggish brown death-adder. He stepped through the light-trap into the tent and watched the screen while the operator slowly turned the aerial.

The corp. was the first to sight the visitors. He was hanging out his week's washing—seven handkerchiefs and a towel—on one of the ropes of the orderly-room tent when he saw the staff car come round the corner of the hill and through the tent-lines. There was a slight scatter of naked figures for the tents, and the corp. himself stepped smartly in one end of his tent and, less than a minute later, smartly out the other end wearing beautifully clean shorts and shirt.

Apart from the driver, there were four others in the car. As they climbed out the corp. muttered to himself, "'Strewh; the ace, king and queen."

They were not quite the top brass from Area Headquarters, but

very nearly. The group-captain, tough, square and face like a bulldog, was staff; the first wing-commander, lean and ascetic with features like a curved knife-blade, was medical; the second, small, trim and dark with a bristling black growth under his nose, was radar. Hovering respectfully behind them was a young flying-officer with notebook and pencil to take down the observations of the mighty.

The corp. saluted smartly and the grouper flicked an acknowledgement.

"The C.O.'s up in the doover, sir. If you'd like to wait in the orderly-room I'll send a message up."

But even as he spoke, and even as he was trying to think of some way of adding a pair of pants to the message, the C.O. appeared on the track coming down the hill.

Helplessly in the middle of the track, the C.O. paused as he recognised the terrible trio and felt their fixed and triple stare on him. Evasive tactics were out of the question. Retreat would have been more obvious than approach, and there was neither rock to the left nor rock to the right nor low, lean thorn between. In his moment's hesitation he remembered, hopelessly, that they had plotted-in a V.I.P. aircraft that morning; and he cursed whoever it was who had not thought to send warning of the visitors.

Only the throbbing of the motor broke the expectant hush over the camp as the men watched from their tents and other discreet vantage points. Then a very suppressed cheer in the form of a muttered "You bloody corker!" came from one of the tents as the C.O. visibly straightened his shoulders and as smartly as the precipitous track would allow, marched down to meet the visitors.

If the visitors heard the remark, they showed no sign; they were standing at attention as though on a parade-ground. The corp. gazed sadly over their shoulders and wished fervently for a greater catastrophe to engulf the present one.

The C.O. had never realised that it was possible to feel even more naked than he was. As he came to the foot of the hill he pulled himself even more erect and stepped up to meet the steel-blue gaze of the group-captain. He halted with parade-ground precision and threw a salute that made his whole body shake. The grouper returned with equal smartness, while the winkers stood behind him like statues.

The C.O. was afraid his voice would fail him, but it came clear and firm. "Good-afternoon, sir. Would you like to wait in the orderly-room while I change?"

Inspection of the unit was brief, stiff and cold. There was no mention of nudity, although the C.O. wished they would thrash it out then and there and have done with it. To make matters worse, the subject seemed to gain silent emphasis as the inspection progressed. In one of the tents at which they paused the W/T operator on night-shift was sprawled naked and asleep and unwarned of the visitors. When the C.O. called to him he grunted and rolled over.

"Let him sleep," said Staff tersely.

The C.O. turned away. He hated the flying-officer who was taking notes, and wished he could read the shorthand.

Medical wanted to know about the snakes, and, sensing a faint warmth of interest, the C.O. offered to produce a live one within fifteen minutes.

"Don't trouble," said Medical. "I'd just like to see what precautions you take."

They tramped through the sand to the medical-orderly's tent. It was neat and well-kept, and the medical-orderly gave the C.O. a moment's welcome relief from the spotlight. "The snakes are everywhere, sir," he told the winker. "Death-adders. We've even had them in our clothes boxes under the beds. But no one's been bitten yet."

The winker's face seemed sharper than ever. "And what could you do in the case of a bite?"

"Usual treatment, sir. Ligature and incision. We keep anti-venene in the refrigerator. It's for tiger-snakes, actually, but it should help. I don't think there is one for death-adders."

"And are all the men well versed in the treatment of bites?"

"We all wear these," the medical-orderly said, indicating the leather thong which hung around his neck and from which dangled his identification-discs. "They'd make a good ligature in an emergency. And"—he held up one of the discs to show where one edge had been filed to razor-like sharpness—"we've taken the liberty of doing this. It's not strictly according to regulations, but it seemed a good idea."

"M'm," said Medical. He seemed to have lost interest in the subject, and his gaze wandered around the tent and up to the roof on which were pasted colourful pictures of nude females culled from magazines which specialised in the subject. It was the only decoration to his tent which the medical-orderly permitted himself, and the C.O. quite approved of the gallery at other times. Now he noticed that the flying-officer was taking notes.

"Would you like to see the mess now, sir?" he asked the grouper.

They walked quickly through the mess and kitchen which the cook always kept meticulously clean and as cool as an occasional

sprinkling of water allowed. The C.O. thanked his deity that the cook had clothes on.

They went up the hill to the doover. The operator's nakedness was concealed to some extent by the darkness of the tent. He was fixing the range and bearing of an aircraft at eighty miles, which was an excellent performance in that climate.

In the little operations-hut near by the second operator was transferring the information to a map and reading off grid references to the W/T operator, who coded and flashed them away with admirable rhythmic speed. Everything was normal, and it would have been an admirable demonstration of efficiency, the C.O. thought, if only the pair of them hadn't tried to dress themselves with handkerchiefs and string.

There was little else to see. The unit's senior mechanic, whose somnolent speech and gesture belied his extraordinarily brilliant technical ability, met the first testing barrage of questions so effortlessly that the wing-commander (radar) had an uneasy feeling he was talking to a superior man. The C.O. and the orderly-room corp. showed the grouper that their administrative organisation was faultless.

The grouper stood up and tersely declined an invitation to afternoon tea.

"I think that's all," he said. "We must be going. Thank you, Pilot-Officer."

The C.O. felt there was a slight emphasis on the "pilot-officer". He saluted and stood by while the party climbed into the car. He noticed with slight, malicious pleasure that their faces were stained with sweat and red dust, and that their shorts and shirts were soaked and sticking to them.

As the car disappeared around the hill the men wandered from their tents over to the orderly-room. The C.O. tore off his shorts and hurled them on the ground. "Wouldn't it?" he said. "Wouldn't it! Wouldn't it! Wouldn't it! For God's sake let's have a beer."

They trooped up to the mess, opened the refrigerator, and held a sympathy meeting over several bottles.

"I don't know," said the C.O. "I just don't know. Not a smile; not a complaint; not a compliment. Three cold fish. Oh, hell. Did you get that pussyfoot taking notes?"

"Oh, it wasn't too bad," the senior mechanic consoled him. "Everything was in pretty good shape. I've been on a lot of units and I know this is a good 'un. You take my word for it."

"That's the hell of it," said the C.O. "That's the rotten, stinkin'

hell of it. They couldn't have faulted a thing. Everything was perfect. Except for one thing. Have you ever been on a unit where a group-captain was saluted by a naked pilot-officer?" He rested his head on his hands and stared at his pannikin of beer.

The orderly-room corp. added his sympathy. "I wouldn't worry too much," he said. "The grouper's not a bad old boy, I've heard. If he's a normal man, he's probably thinking that that young pilot-officer displayed courage and presence of mind in an emergency."

"Pilot-officer!" said the C.O. "If he's thinking of anything, he's thinking of how I'd look as an L.A.C. again. And a naked one at that, probably."

They drank their beer, moodily going back over the inspection and trying to recall any saving features.

For three weeks the C.O. raced through the official mail even before the orderly-room corp. could get to it. And each time he finally pushed it aside with a mixture of irritation and helplessness. "Not a word," he said. "Not one benighted word. Gawd, it's going to be a beaut when it comes!"

He was opening the envelopes of the fourth week's mail and glancing quickly at the contents while the corp. was handing out the personal mail to the rest of the unit. Suddenly he shouted and came to the front of the tent. He had a grin that nearly engulfed his ears. "Listen to this; just listen to this!"

The first paragraphs were made up of praise, in the usual guarded official language, of "the conduct of the unit, with particular reference to technical, administrative and medical sections. In view of the somewhat difficult circumstances and trying climatic conditions under which the unit operates, it is felt that it is maintaining an excellent standard.

"During the inspection, however, a prevalence of snakes was observed, and it is therefore directed that immediate requisition be made on No. — Stores Depot for black leather leggings, and it is further directed that these leggings be incorporated in regulation unit dress and be worn at all times by all members of the unit."

The C.O. laughed. "And it's signed by the old boy himself. The beaut. The bloody old beaut!"

He tossed the letter to the corp., and did a neat and naked little dance on the sand.

J. D. Rutherford

Shorty didn't like Tobruk

IT is a beautiful day in mid-November. A smiling sun shines warmly down from a cloudless sky, streaking the deep blue of the sea with rippling shafts of pure silver. Framed beneath the huge arch of the Harbour Bridge, Port Jackson is at its glorious best.

The Manly ferry throbs purposefully beneath my feet as, threshing the water to white foam, it moves slowly astern from Circular Quay. Almost imperceptibly people on the Quay become doll-like, diminishing in size as the wharves merge snugly into a background of sombre city skyscrapers.

The steady rumble of the traffic-laden bridge rises to the deep-throated roar of a passing city-bound train as the ferry, with propellers churning madly, swings reluctantly around to point its bow towards the open sea. Driven by a salt-laden wind, waves lift and slap themselves sharply against the sides of the turning ship. Slowly at first, but gradually gaining in speed, the Manly ferry is on its way.

I move through the crowded passengers to a position where I can take in the scene. Cheeky-looking tugs and small craft fuss busily to and fro, white waves curling from their bows. Over at Garden Island a rust-stained warship lies wearily at anchor whilst, in the direction of Rose Bay, a flying-boat skims gracefully towards its base.

Somewhere amidships a fiddler draws a tentative bow across a squeaky violin then, suddenly, the three-man orchestra crashes into action. They play a well-known melody of wartime vintage, sickly sentimental but, to me at least, full of memories.

Memories! In a moment I am back again in camp at Puckapunyal where the boys are beefing out this self-same song. I am listening to a concert party on a troopship bound for foreign shores. Between Pinchgut and the tree-clad heights of Middle Head, I hit Mersa Matruh and Sidi Barrani. I travel in convoy up the tortuous road to the plateau near Fort Capuzzo, and I visit the wreck-choked harbour of devastated Tobruk. I am just wallowing through the

jungles of New Guinea when I am assailed violently from behind and a raucous but well-known voicebeefs deafeningly in my ear:

"Johnny, you old son-of-a-gun!"

I spin around to face my assailant and see a tall, lean-faced stranger—then, suddenly, I recognise him.

"Shorty! Well, for the love of Mike...!"

We are as excited as two kids at a circus, which I expect is understandable seeing that it is the first time we have met since Milne Bay.

Shorty and I served in the same unit through the Middle East and Milne Bay, but at the Bay he goes down with malaria and is evacuated home to Australia. Next thing we hear is that he has received his discharge and, after that—well, he just seems to pass into oblivion.

And now, today, here he is! It is the first time I have seen the old war-horse in civvies and he looks very much different—older, too.

So we settle down to some steady chin-wagging and I tell him about Bowden, who has settled down in Melbourne and has a wife and umpteen kids, and about Cummo who now owns a pub. And I mention that Cherry Sutton and Wimpy Jones both joined up again for service in Korea. Then we talk about Tommy Pritchard and Snowy Dawes, and old Reg who didn't come back—but we don't talk about Tobruk!

Shorty didn't like Tobruk.

If I remember rightly, however, there weren't many places that he *did* like; but Tobruk undoubtedly held pride of place on his list of dislikes.

He was a queer mixture, Shorty—a regular whinger. When things were quiet he moaned about the monotonous inaction, when they livened up a bit he complained about the increased activity, but when events got really hot, you'd have thought he was holding off the besiegers on his very own.

And yet it wasn't the bombs or the shells or any of the other *real* dangers that irked Shorty so much as the little, petty, humdrum things. They ate into his soul like the steady drip, drip of a leaking tap. Things like monotonous food and chlorinated water and badgering corporals, the never-changing scenery and the swarming rats, and snakes and scorpions.

And fleas! Tobruk was alive with fleas and Shorty had a very marked aversion to them. Deep down in the Wadi Auda was an abandoned Eyetie-built cave in which he had set up home. It was

an ideal hide-out for times of stress but it had one decided disadvantage—fleas.

For a time Shorty scratched and cursed yet managed to put up with them, but there came the time when they made it just a little too much of a welter and their much-bitten meal-ticket, after a hectic night of scratching sleeplessness, emerged from his cave, breathing fire and vowing dire vengeance.

Fleas were declared enemy No. 1 and the battle was on.

The first move looked uncommonly like a general Dunkirk as bedding and stores and what-have-you were all bundled unceremoniously out into the wadi. Blankets and clothing were taken to a safe distance and liberally sprinkled with kerosene. Then Shorty, with reckless abandon, saturated the cave with kerosene, laid a trail of kerosene-soaked waste out into the wadi, and applied the necessary match. Operation Flea was in progress!

In due course the cave was re-occupied, bed neatly made, and stores and clothing stacked nicely in position. A boastful Shorty was then free to go visiting along the wadi to earbash his long-suffering hosts on the merits of personal hygiene and, in particular, the brand of hygiene practised by a man of initiative named Shorty.

He should never have made that visit!

Down where the Wadi Auda opened out into the blue Mediterranean, there roamed the only four neutrals in the area—four little stray asses that were later destined to become victims of the marauding Luftwaffe. Each of these donks was reputed to harbour more virulent fleas to the square inch than King's Cross can boast black marketeers and spivs—which is certainly talking in big numbers.

Shorty's return to his cave coincided with the arrival of the Luftwaffe to continue with the job of endeavouring to decimate the garrison. In consequence his entry was more than a little undignified.

High above the scream of the descending bombs and the zooming of the Stukas' engines, an anguished roar of sheer rage reverberated down the wadi. Shorty had discovered his unwelcome visitor! There, snuggled up contentedly on his bed, was one of those self-same little asses from away down the wadi.

Shorty was ropeable! Normally he was rather fond of a good practical joke but he liked to have some say in the choice of victims. He could hand it out, but he couldn't take it. . . .

The ferry is rolling a little as we cross the Heads. Out beyond South Head a small coaster, inward bound, rides low in the water. Manly lies dead ahead.

Shorty tells me that, after his discharge early in 1943, he lands a good job with a firm of importers, and he is doing pretty well.

"Married, too," he asserts proudly and then, wistfully, "No kids, though."

I see him looking at some youngsters who are industriously collecting cigarette packets and there is a sort of hurt look in his eyes. A character rattles a collection box under our noses as an indication that the orchestra is in need of sustenance, so we do the right thing and drop in a couple of coins.

Then, as the ship's siren blasts a warning whistle, we move off to take up a position near the gangway.

Manly wharf looms ahead, the ferry cuts her engines and we glide to our berth. There is much jostling as the gangways are put into position but, at last, Shorty and I manage to disembark without any undue bother.

Shorty tells me that he is heading for Dee Why so I walk with him to the bus terminus. On the way, we exchange addresses. Then, as the bus is about to move off, we shake hands, say how good it is that we have met up again and, with a "drop in and see us sometime", Shorty swings on to the bus and is on his way. The last I see of him he is waving good-bye from the footboard.

Having a little time to put in, I saunter down to the shark-proof pool and watch the kids diving for coins.

I am wondering if Shorty has ever been able to discover the identity of the practical joker who led the donkey into his cave back there in the Wadi Auda. Knowing Shorty as I do, I have good reason to believe that he has neither forgiven nor forgotten the affront to his dignity and well-being.

And this, I might say, is one very good reason why I am particularly careful, back there on the ferry, to avoid any reference to the days when men were "Rats" in a little place named Tobruk.

T. A. G. Hungerford

The Magnolia-Tree

THE STEEP incline flattened out into a small shelf about a quarter of an acre in extent, cut in half by a hot stream that had gushed from the flank of the volcano farther up the valley. Murphy, at the end of the line, was the last to reach it, and shrugged the pack from his shoulders with a sigh. Behind them the flat coastal plain spread like a green sea, a woolly sea that washed in motionless waves at the feet of the hills and surged in a dense flood up the ravines that seamed all the country around the burning mountain.

"This'll do us, eh, Jim?" he suggested to the fair man who stood watching him.

"Uh-huh. Good as we'll get."

"O.K."

Murphy turned to a big kanaka.

"Work'im fire, Lukwa," he said quietly, pointing to a patch of dried grass. "Long harp."

"Yes, Masta."

"I'll get some tucker out," the fair man volunteered, stooping over his pack.

"What we got?" Murphy inquired. He was a big, dark man, with corded arms and heavy shoulders, and legs like small trees.

"Roast duck," the other replied, and laughed. "Bully—but we got plenty of it."

"Then take it out of your own pack, Jim," Murphy said. "We been using mine all along, and you'll find yourself carrying all the kai soon."

"Broad shoulders," the fair man shrugged. "Hurry the coon with the fire."

Murphy looked up the valley, at the volcano that from where he stood seemed to block the eastern end of it. The setting sun shone hotly on it as it rose, the bare, golden mass of it, from the jungle that clawed at its sides. The higher slopes were too hot for vegetation, and

cotton-wool dabs of smoke clung among the ragged gullies. High above it towered an immense plume of pearly smoke, all washed with warm pink where the last rays of light cascaded over its bulging sides.

Behind it stretched mile after mile of lonely purple hills and twilit jungle that withdrew through mist and rain beyond the horizon. Unconsciously, Murphy sighed, and turned to watch the kanakas.

Two of them had cleared a patch in the coarse, hummocky grass and erected over it a framework of slender saplings, held together by strips of kunda-vine. They covered it with a dense mat of ginger leaves, enough to keep out the rain of one night, and spread a layer of ferns on the ground in its shelter.

Murphy grinned to himself. Once you couldn't sleep without clean sheets and a pillow, and now you curled up like a grub on the ground and slept like a top. Life, like death, a great leveller.

The fair man was dishing out the heated bully-beef into two dixies; Murphy squatted on his haunches and began to eat.

"Our leafy's ready, Jim," he said. "They're good coons, all right."

"Yeah, they're all right."

The other's face was impassive, his voice impersonal. He seemed to be without interest in what was going on around him, his whole attention fastened on the meat in his dish. Another might have resented it, but Murphy had known him too long, and was used to it. Yet it seemed sometimes that he could remember a time when it had been different, and at times, as now, he tried to crystallise the memory into something definite.

When they had finished eating, they sat in the deepening twilight and smoked, talking softly about the kanakas, the island, the days behind them and the days ahead. By sunset of the next day, they hoped to make the bare slopes above them, now hidden in a thin mist of rain and dusk.

"Jim," Murphy said suddenly, "did you notice the volcano, at sunset?"

The fair man didn't answer him immediately. He looked at him closely and then said:

"No, not particularly. Why?"

"Oh, I dunno. It was so . . . well, pretty." Murphy rolled himself another cigarette, and shielded his face in his hat as he lit it.

"That's all right, if you go for it, I suppose," the other replied casually. "I don't."

If you go for it, Murphy thought; and suddenly, for no reason at all, he remembered the magnolia-tree. Poor old Jim!

"Jim," he asked softly, "remember the magnolia-tree?"

A long time ago, those hot summer nights when he used to ride around to the Bateses' on his bike after tea to beg Jim off for a swim. Jim's mother was a funny woman—her house was always spotlessly clean; and after she had polished the floors she used to spread newspapers over them so they wouldn't get marked again in a hurry. None of the youngsters, who flocked into the Murphy home like a cloud of starlings, liked to go inside the Bates place; even Murph, Jim's best friend, never felt comfortable there. It seemed that they were jealous of him. When he asked if Jim might come out, Mrs. Bates would screw up her eyes and say, "Well, he was out last night, down the beach. . . ."

Mr. Bates, who always sat away from the table reading, would stop and listen. He never lowered his paper, but you could feel his attention on the conversation, and when his wife had said yes or no, he would rustle the pages and go on with his reading. Jim always had to wheedle: "Aw, go on, Mum—let's!" as though he were asking for the world; and she'd look at him for a moment and then at Murph, squirming uncomfortably by the door.

"Well, all right, then," she would usually say, "you can go. But I don't know what you got a home for, I really don't. See you're back by nine o'clock or . . ."

They never waited to hear more, but ran off before she changed her mind—she had never actually done it, but they always felt that she might. Murph breathed easier as he left the house; but he never got over the embarrassment that he felt in the kitchen of Jim's home, begging for such a little thing. A swim after tea on a hot night, which his own easy-going parents took for granted.

It was always the same performance, as if they wanted to keep Jim to themselves all the time. He was afraid to ask them for permission to go out, frightened that they might somehow divine that what he found outside his home meant more in a way than what lay inside it. He always said to Murph: "You ask her, Murph—she'll let me, then!"

All the evening, they skylarked in the warm river water, under the floodlight on a pole at the end of the jetty. Inside the circle of light the water was clear and green like the glass of a green bottle; in the dark, outside the circle, it was black. You swam through it wreathed in pale fire, and could see where the fish and crabs darted around the

piles under the jetty. Deep down cold flames writhed among the rocks on the bottom.

The girls joined in the rough and tumble; and there was one night when Murph, flinging his arms around one of them to pull her into the water, her hard little body, cool in the clinging cotton bathers, felt it like cold fire against his side. In the midst of all the splashing and the noise, he stopped dead still. The shrill cries of the girls, the laughter and the cool caress of the water, the mysterious green fires in the dark, were not enough. A summer night like this held something more, something new. He knew it suddenly and certainly; it made him feel sad and lonely, and yet filled with a strange and exultant power.

As the hot summer nights of that year slipped by, Murph sensed that most of the others knew it too, an intangible thread that carried a curious current from one to the other. Lying on the sand after their swim, on the cool sand that was yet warm underneath and smelled of salt water and seaweed, they laughed and gossiped, smoked tentative cigarettes, some of them, and watched the golden lights of the prawn-fishers bobbing in the shallows, but found it hard to look into each others' faces. They were chary of giving away a secret they learned all at the same time, waiting, half-afraid, for the thing, whatever it was, to happen.

One night, Murph and Jim left the others under the light at the land end of the jetty and wheeled their bikes up a quiet street where the darkness lay in deep pools between the lights. The music of the hurdy-gurdy on the beach pursued them faintly as they went and the whole of the avenue was deserted.

"Gee, Jim," Murph said suddenly, sniffing like a setter, "cop the smell!" It was a bitter-sweet perfume, and it hung on the air like the scent of orange-blossoms, a hundred times intensified.

"Yes, a magnolia-tree," Jim said quietly, but with a curious sort of satisfaction in his voice. "There's not many of them around," he added, confidently, "but I know where there's another." They pedalled a few yards in silence, and he said suddenly, "Look, there it is, the magnolia-tree."

Murph looked where he pointed; it was a dark, glossy tree, smooth leaves streaked with moonlight, and it was starred with great luminous white flowers, chalices of scent and dew and darkness.

"Magnolias," Jim said again, softly. As he stood in the dark he saw a moon-silvered terrace and shadowy trees, and white arms that were somehow mixed up with the dreamy songs they had been singing on the beach earlier that night. He listened, and the remembered

music teased the warm air and beat in throbbing waves against his heart. "Aren't they lovely—like pale, lovely girls."

Before Murph knew what he was going to do, he leaned his bike against the fence and shinned up the tree, which hung low over the footpath. He was gone only a few moments; Murph, waiting below, could hear him rustling as he clambered around in the boughs above, and then he dropped lightly to the path with an armful of exquisite blooms.

"Look . . . smell!" he said, but buried his own face among the waxen petals.

The other boy stood uneasily by and looked up and down the street. Heck, the old girl who owned the joint might come out, and then there'd be a blue—she was a crabby old sort. Besides, a man was growing up, and you didn't go racing around the streets with bundles of flowers like, well, like a sissy. Someone might come along and see them, someone they knew.

Almost as the thought crossed his mind, a cyclist pedalled up the avenue from the beach, a big lout who was in their class at school. "Gawd, be on the pansies!" he called out in an assumed falsetto voice. "Give's a kiss for a flower, Cecil!"

He was swallowed in the darkness before the sound of his voice had dripped out of the air; Murph turned to Jim, who stood staring after the bike as though he had been smacked in the face. The magnolias lay at his feet, spoiled in the red dust. Murph picked up his bike.

"Come on, Jim," he said, "it's getting late."

"Murph—" the other boy said, and stopped. He wheeled his bike out on to the road, and pedalled off in silence. When they got to the Bateses', it was all in darkness, and they stopped at the front gate, noiselessly.

"Good-night, Jim," Murph whispered. "See you tomorrow."

"Murph, do you think that too?" Jim demanded.

"Think what?"

"Ar—stop kidding. You know what. You heard that gawk on the bike!"

Murph knew what Jim meant all right, but he didn't know what to say. He had never seen anyone look quite like Jim had, then, the hurt and the bewilderment. He fiddled with the bell on the handlebar and muttered: "Aw, I dunno. You don't want to take any notice of those silly cows. They don't understand, sort of . . ."

"Well, if they don't understand, then let them mind their own bloody business!" Jim blurted. "Mum, and Dad, and everyone!"

He pushed open the side gate, ran down the path and was lost in the shadowy garden.

"You remember that," Jim said, in a strained voice. "You're a funny cove!"

Murph looked at his cigarette. It had gone out.

"Give us a light," he muttered.

All around them the secret noises of the jungle whispered unceasingly, mingling with the soft murmur of the river, and a thousand phosphorous eyes watched unblinkingly from the darkness.

"Yes, I remember it, and that's why I can't set you about the volcano. You've changed a bit since then, china."

"Haven't we all!" the other laughed shortly. "I learned my lesson early, that's all. Remember that pet magpie you used to have, and when the wild birds found it out in the paddock, how they picked Christ out of the poor thing? Well, that's how it is. You can't be any different from the mob unless you're rich or able to bat them down. I'm neither, so I toe the line. In the long run, you collect less hurt."

"That's bull—you don't have to." Murphy stood up and stretched. "You don't get nowhere, buckling under."

The other merely shrugged, with a funny, tight little grin, and Murph, watching him, knew that he had been talking through his hat. He didn't even believe it himself. Unless you strung along with the mob, and kept your nose wiped, you got a thin time of it—unless, as Jim had said, you could stand up to the lot of them. And that took a lot of doing. People generally seemed to band together like primitives to harry any poor cow that stood out of the ruck, seemed frightened of him, almost. Life, like death, a great leveller.

"Think I'll hit the hay." He stretched again, and yawned. "Coming?"

Jim stubbed his cigarette in the damp leaves.

"Yeah, no sense in sitting here."

He stood up and for a moment laid his hand on the other's shoulder.

"Don't take any notice of what I said, china. It'll be all right, you'll find."

He meant it, too . . . it was just a matter of keeping your nose wiped, keeping your thoughts to yourself and never laying yourself open to ridicule. You could have a lot of happiness in a quiet way. You rubbed along.

"Yeah, it'll be all right, all right!" Murph said—the old formula. "But you don't have to wear a front for me, Jim."

"No Murph, I guess not." (*It's all I can say, even if it means adding pretence to pretence.*) "Coming?"

Together, they crawled into the leafy shelter. The night remained, full of beauty, cool, ageless. A soft glow showed where the kanakas crouched close over their tiny blaze, and the fireflies trailed their crazy tinsel web among the dark trees. Far up the valley, the volcano strained up out of the jungle, clothing itself exquisitely in the first cold light of the rising moon.

Pisé

Soft, golden and old
and useless, now;
half-hidden in the fold
of a gully. And poplars show

where a garden was planted:
mint, perhaps, lavender and thyme.
Some geraniums slanted
against a wall, climb

still—splashed pink and red
against the weathered stone:
they alone not now dead
by the house rain-touched, time-worn,

wind-smooth, whose genial beat
did not cease suddenly
with the last passage of feet
across the floor—not utterly.

Didn't cease at all . . .
This still, roofless room
and sunny stone wall
that hands made, are still warm

remembering food eaten,
laughter sounded, child's tears—
recalled, windowless and weatherbeaten,
with the calm look time wears.

T. A. G. HUNGERFORD

J. E. Macdonnell

A Destroyer is Born

A BEAUTIFUL new brute of a ship, square-tailed, slice-bowed and all grace and guts between, she curtsied her nose to the first deep-sea swell off Sydney's Middle Harbour, sniffed it, liked it, and drank deep, almost to her flares. The next, on the turn out, caught her bilges and lifted her on a graceful roll that wiped the truck of her stumpy, latticed-aluminium foremast in a tentative arc across the weeping sky. Then she was round, facing the waiting grey troughs of tumbling brine which the men aboard who built her, and her brand-new naval crew, meant her to master. Her captain, seawise, swaying easily beside his compass, feeling her with sympathetic understanding, spoke to the first lieutenant. He picked up a microphone. "Ship is about to work up to full power. Hands are warned to keep off the upper deck."

The captain bent to the voice-pipe which ran like a nerve to the wheel-house, and through it to the engine-room deep in her vitals; here a bell rang and a pointer jerked peremptorily to "Full ahead". She coughed brown smoke from her funnel-mouth, which whipped instantly to shreds in the wind, and shook with the feel of her power. The subdued whine of the engine-room fans crescendoed to a hungry roar, sucking cold air into her hot iron throat. Deep down among the hum of turbines an overalled figure turned a large wheel. The hum mounted to a drumming scream of power. From her boilers, through the engine-room bulkhead, where pressured jets of oil-driven flame wrapped and wreathed round the tubes, 50,000 horsepower strained to spin her huge clover-leaves of phosphor-bronze at 120 revolutions per minute. Their thrashing grip sent a smother of tossing white from her tail.

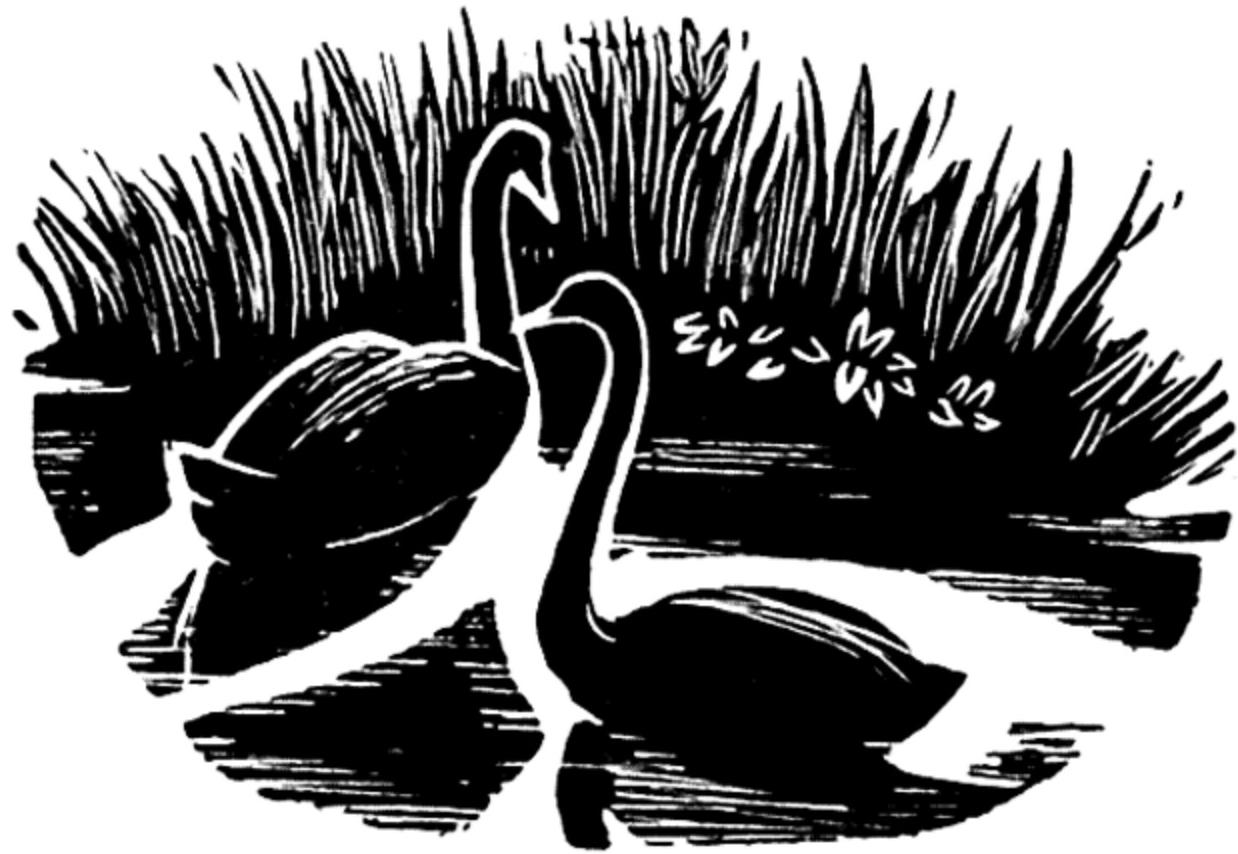
The rev.-counter stepped up—130, 140, 200. She was plunging into the oncoming combers and tossing them back over her head in white sheets of driven spray, clear over the bridge. Now and again a big one would catch her down, and 2,400 tons of steel bucketed through the green wall. Then she lifted, up, higher, almost forefoot-

clear; the wave ran under her bilges, passing the point of balance; her stern lifted and she smacked down as though she'd stamped her forefoot on something solid. She seemed to stagger in mid-flight before the strength of her engines regained her pace and drove her on over the ridged sea.

Another 15 minutes and her rev.-counter showed 300—30 knots into a force-4 sea and half a gale blowing. It was "all-hands-grab-hold" now, sliding, clinging and bracing as she pitched in frenzied purpose up and through and over, the bridge swept continuously by gusts of spray. Watching the bucking bows, one remembered that in such a sea British destroyer *Glowworm* took on the German cruiser *Hipper* and fought her with her open guns, and rammed her towering enemy fair amidships. Here the heavy-breeched twin 4.5's were completely enclosed in gas-tight turrets.

Only a few seasoned uniforms were on the bridge now. The captain, who had not moved from his voice-pipe, ordered: "Half-ahead together. Starb'd ten." The thrashing astern died to a mere heap of white; she nosed her bow round, confident now, disregarded the few final slaps, and in a minute or two was riding easily with wind and waves astern. In that savage hour's run head-on into breaking seas at full-power, she had twisted and forced and felt herself. Now she was a *ship*.

Hands appeared on her quarter-deck, working swiftly round the halyards on her ensign-staff. The captain spoke, a whistle shrilled. All hands stood to attention. The Red Ensign, emblem of dockyard control and shoreside responsibility, fluttered to her wet steel decks. In its place, whipping and curling, rose the White Ensign, the stern-wind blowing its colourful red-white-and-blue forward towards her superstructure in proud benediction. *Tobruk*, now H.M.A.S., accepted destroyer of the Australian Fleet, headed home to base.



This Night's Orbit

I have walked on moonlit grass before,
back and along outside my house.
And if there is nothing can restore
that time, and little enough to rouse
so much as thought of it here within sound
of a clean sea, beside white dunes,
amid bottle-brush, I would not be bound
in this night's orbit or this moon's.
For all that I know now or have known
is even my life itself, outspread
where still I walk; old scenes are blown
like sand across these hillocks; and my head
could bury in the past. But always I have met,
and shall meet, the fresh hour. And though one might
read a learnt lesson through and regret
blunders made, chances killed outright,
harms done, and that greatest harm of all—
days wasted, profitless, without joy—
it is not that either. The turn and fall
of living brings me into the employ
of wars, business, events, to run
new errands, hardly of my own will,
along an old time's pathway, one
overgrown but known blindfold still.

ROBERT D. FITZGERALD

Song in Autumn

Though we have put
white breath to its brief caper
in the early air,
and have known elsewhere
stiff fingers, frost underfoot,
sun thin as paper;

cold then was a lens
focussing sight, and showed that riggers' gear,
the spider's cables,
anchored between the immense
steel trusses of built grass. The hills were so near
you could pick up pebbles.

It is different at evening: damp rises
not crisp or definite like frost
but seeping into the blood and brain—
the end of enterprises.
And while, out of many things lost,
courage may remain,

this much is certain
from others' experience
and was indeed foretold:
noon's over; the days shorten.
Let there be no pretence;
none here likes the cold.

ROBERT D. FITZGERALD

Nativity

The thin distraction of a spider's web
 Collects the clear cold drops of night.
 Seeds falling on the water spread
 Rippling targets to the light.

The rumour in the ear now murmurs less,
 The snail draws in its tender horn,
 The heart becomes a bare attentiveness,
 And in that bareness Light is born.

JAMES MCAULEY

Morning Song

Tree that in darkness stood,
 Darker itself than all,
 Gathering to its mood
 Out of air and quietude
 The faint dewfall:

Now to the brighter powers
 Renders its sacrifice,
 Mixed with the scent of flowers;
 Yields through these matin hours
 A breath to the skies.

Close by, the native thrush
 Draws sound from a clear-toned well;
 Pours through the glittering hush
 Of sunrise in the bush
 Love's miracle,

Singing: O men, awake!
 How earth waits for your waking!
 The Spirit waits too, to make
 All things new for your sake,
 And your partaking.

JAMES MCAULEY

New Guinea

(*In memory of Archbishop Alain de Boismenu, M.S.C.*)

Bird-shaped island with secretive bird voices,
Land of apocalypse, where the earth dances,
The mountains speak, the doors of the spirit open,
And men are shaken by obscure trances.

The forest-odours, insects, clouds, and fountains
Are like the figures of my inmost dream.
Vibrant with untellable recognition;
A wordless revelation is their theme.

The stranger is engulfed in those high valleys,
Where mists of morning linger like the breath
Of Wisdom moving our specular darkness.
Regions of prayer, of solitude, and of death!

Life holds its shape in the modes of dance and music,
The hands of craftsmen trace its patternings;
Yet stains of blood, and evil spirits, lurk
Like cockroaches in the interstices of things.

We in that land begin our rule in courage,
The seal of peace gives warrant to intrusion;
But then our grin of emptiness breaks the skin,
Formless dishonour spreads its proud confusion.

Whence that deep longing for an exorciser,
For Christ descending as a thaumaturge
Into his saints, as formerly in the desert,
Warring with demons on the outer verge.

Only by this can life become authentic,
Configured henceforth in eternal mode:
Splendour, simplicity, joy—such as were seen
In one who now sleeps by his mountain road.

JAMES MCAULEY

Merrick Long

The Horsebreaker

ACROBAT was the best looking horse of the four which we ran off that morning. A light bay, short and compact, he was muscled and quick, and his turns in the yard were one movement with his forward pace. There was no spurt of red sand as he wheeled round in his stride—like a rubber ball bounced off a wall, he appeared to change direction without wasting time or impetus.

Acrobat was a fitting name for him. His head was big, strong and determined. He looked more mature and formidable than the others, and in fact was nearly two years older than any of them—nearly seven. Jim Taylor had broken him in and ridden him for a while, then turned him out as a spare hack until he had broken the next lot of horses. Acrobat had stayed in the paddock, and no owner had been found for him. He had grown and filled out, and his determination and cunning had increased with his age.

It actually took Jim more than a minute to catch Acrobat. The other horses had rushed about the yard in fear and trembling, but Acrobat pirouetted about with very little evidence of fear: no doubt he was frightened, but he didn't look it. He was eluding the breaker and looking for a means of escape. He had jumped over the stock-yards before this, and when he was broken in had jumped through them. He had struck the rails full on with his head, had broken one of them and dived out into the paddock.

Taylor, knowing Acrobat's power, neither used a whip nor hustled him, but walked slowly about in the yard checking Acrobat as often as he could, making him stand and face him at intervals. Acrobat reared, and looked over the top of the rails. Once he swung his forelegs over the top, and might have see-sawed over had not one of the men roared at him and frightened him back. Often he would run at the gate, rear and drive at the top bars with his chest, his head over the gate, and legs tucked back, a living battering-ram. Finally, he came to the conclusion that the yard was too strong for him. He became less active, faced Taylor for longer periods, back-

ing and slewing about slowly as Jim's hand approached his nose. Then he would lift a few inches off his forefeet, swing with a graceful, effortless sweep to the rails, and run and turn about the yard once more.

Jim stayed nearly in the middle of the yard, talking, talking, talking. Acrobat would face him again, break again, face back once more. Gradually his turns became fewer, and it took more to startle him. Jim kept shuffling forward, a few inches at a time, his hand outstretched. He rested his fingers on Acrobat's nose, tickled along the bridge. . . . Again Acrobat broke, wheeled about at the rails, faced up once more to Jim. Some more rubbing, another break, then Jim's tickling hand held him longer. He brought the bridle slowly near Acrobat's nose, slipped the headstall up the bridge of his nose. Acrobat, suddenly remembering his training, opened his mouth and snapped at the bit. Jim, only too ready to oblige, lifted the bridle, let the bit into Acrobat's mouth and slipped the headstall over his ears.

As though realising his mistake, Acrobat wheeled and made for the rails. His head came half round as he reached the end of the reins, dragging Jim across the yard. Then he swung his rump round and faced Jim once more, coming a pace towards him to ease the strain on the reins.

Someone passed a saddle cloth through the fence for a blindfold. "I think I can get it on him," Jim said. "He might strike at me, of course, but once it's over this near eye I ought to handle him. Come on, Acrobat, just let me rub this along your dial and you'll find it's not so bad. Whee, horse. Keep still now, and you'll come to no harm—or less harm than if you don't take it well. If I can get it across this eye, I've got a long way on the road. Whee, Acrobat. Keep still, and don't you lift that foot, you coot. In a minute you won't be able to lift it. If once I can get this . . . Whee, horse. Steady a bit, we've got you that far anyway."

Acrobat might have struck at Jim. For a second he snorted in defiance as Jim moved the cloth towards his face; and he seemed to be just ready to balance on his hind legs and lunge. But Jim's actions were too steady. It was hard for Acrobat to pick a psychological moment for attack. Jim was too deliberate, too sure. The blindfold covered Acrobat's near eye, and Jim, stepping into Acrobat's blind spot, gradually ran the saddle cloth under the cheek straps of the bridle, blindfolding him completely.

"Hobbles next."

Colin walked in with the hobbles. Jim wasn't nearly so talkative or so careful now that Acrobat was blindfolded, for a horse loses his

fight entirely then. Acrobat was too uncertain to move, and the hobbles being put on his forefeet only brought a shiver from him as the leather was passed round each fetlock and buckled, or as the connecting chain rattled. Jim rubbed him about the legs and chest as Colin went back for one of the ropes. Then Jim handed the reins to Colin, took the rope and passed it over Acrobat's neck, causing another shiver. Jim ran the free end of the rope through the ring at the other end, forming a noose round his neck, and pulled the noose tight at the base of his neck.

"Give it a half-hitch, Jim," said the manager who had come down to look the horses over. "We don't want to choke him."

"Yes, Boss. I was going to do that." Jim made a knot through the ring of the rope, stopping it from getting any tighter on Acrobat's neck.

"Hold him now, Colin." He coiled the rope and passed it between Acrobat's forelegs.

"I don't think I'll spend much time round his hindquarters, whether he's blindfolded or not. What sort of a throw am I?" Jim threw the rope between Acrobat's hind legs. He plunged, tripping in the hobbles, and kicking, but the rope lay out on the ground between his fore and hind legs. Jim sneaked round behind him, picked up the end of the rope, advanced in a circle back to Acrobat's shoulder, dragging the rope with him, then pulled the rope against Acrobat's hind fetlock. The horse plunged again and kicked, but Colin held his head and Jim stayed by his shoulder, holding the rope tight against the fetlock, ran the loose end of the rope through the noose round his neck, and suddenly pulled on the rope. Acrobat fought and kicked, tripping and struggling in the ropes and hobbles. His hind leg was drawn off the ground. Jim knotted his rope back on itself, dropped the end of the rope, and pulled the blindfold from Acrobat's eyes.

Acrobat didn't move. He couldn't move. His forelegs were hobbled together, and one leg was held from the ground. While his hind leg was held forward he couldn't plunge on to his forelegs and kick. He couldn't move without falling over. Jim gave him a smack in the middle of his back and vaulted on to him; knelt up on his back, swung himself round to face his rump, swung back again, then slid back to his rump and down past his hocks to the ground. There were many things Acrobat would have liked to do, but he was powerless. Next moment Jim had vaulted back on to his rump. He lay right along his back, whistled in his ear, and slid to the ground on the wrong side.

"Hop up and get used to him, Colin. You might as well take a ride on him."

Colin hopped up on Acrobat and went through most of Jim's antics, with not quite so carefree an air, then slid off and awaited developments. Jim was already getting Colin's saddle. Acrobat gave no trouble as Jim plumped cloth and saddle on his back with no sign of courtesy.

"I used to leave a horse tied up this way for a long time—till I got my collarbone broken. Now I know what it's like to be tied up and not able to rest a limb. I've got a bit more pity for them now."

Jim made sure that the saddle would stay on. He pulled the girth and surcingle as tight as he could get it. Hampered as he was, Acrobat gave a few of what would have been bucks if he had been free. He strained with his ribs, and set the saddle creaking.

"Well, we'll let you go now, and see what you want to do." Jim undid the rope, let it flop to the ground, and pulled it from Acrobat's legs. Then he undid the second half-hitch, drew the rope right away and threw it over the fence. Next he took off the hobbles, leaving Acrobat considerably freer.

"Lead him about in the yard, Colin. I've got to saddle Kol yet."

Jim's horse, Kolynos, was a force to be reckoned with. Jim saddled him and brought him into the yard, and at once Acrobat ceased to look so formidable. Kolynos stood a good hand taller and was built much stronger, thick and heavy of bone. Acrobat still gave the impression of being made of indiarubber, but somehow he looked softer now. He still looked as if he should be breathing fire, but the calm determination of the great raw-boned chestnut made him seem less of a menace. Originally, Jim had caught his horse somewhere in the wilds, had run him in from a mob of semi-wild horses, had handled and ridden him and stuck to him for years. Kolynos had carried Jim for thousands of miles, had done every conceivable kind of work, and had done it well. He had run down scrub cattle, when his firm steady mouth and unwavering determination had allowed Jim to ride him at a gallop through thick scrub. Jim admitted that time and again he had held his breath, unable to pull the horse up, while they galloped through seemingly impenetrable scrub after a runaway beast; that he had left everything to the horse, and that they had galloped through into the open and had thrown their beast. Kolynos had beaten racehorses, jumped stockyards; Jim's wife could ride him over the wing of the yards at the "Four Corners". Jim had let him go at night and ridden him bareback over the gate, slipping off as Kolynos reached the ground, and letting him run on out into the horse paddock.

Kolynos had helped to break in many horses. Now he was led in to bully Acrobat, and Acrobat suffered in comparison. Kolynos did not look fierce as Acrobat did, but his big bold head looked more determined, calmer, wiser.

"Wait till I get on, Colin." Jim climbed into his saddle, sat with Kolynos by the rails. Colin led Acrobat into the middle of the yard.

"Right you are. Sneak on him."

Colin looked a little pale. Acrobat had a reputation, and reputation goes a long way towards winning a battle. He had been roughly treated and cowed during the afternoon, but Acrobat was not an ordinary horse. The collar rope and the tumbling about on him might not have had the desired effect. Colin slipped into the saddle.

Jim swung Kolynos against Acrobat. Acrobat gave a flying buck, but Kolynos was still beside him, jamming him towards the rails. Acrobat could not buck round or spring sideways, and a cannon against Kolynos produced not the slightest effect; Kolynos was braced to withstand the shock. Acrobat bucked high in the air but only forward, and his bucks lacked that extra venom that might have made him dangerous. Once round the yard and he pulled up altogether. Colin leaned slightly forward in the saddle.

"Sit back! Don't do that, for God's sake! He'll go straight back if you sit like that!" Colin sat very much straighter.

"Keep him going—run him around. Come on, Kol."

Acrobat was hunted round and round the yard, pulled up and turned, run back and round in the opposite direction, always with the rails on one side and the unshakeable Kolynos on the other. After a few rounds Jim pulled away and left Colin to force Acrobat round the yard on his own. Acrobat gave no trouble.

"Get off him, Colin. You needn't ride him out in the paddock today—he's got a bit more to go through with yet. I'll lead him down to the 'Four Corners', eh, Boss?"

"Good idea, Jim."

Jim dismounted. Colin held Acrobat in, pulling him to a standstill, and dismounted rather gingerly. The manager expressed approval of the trend of events.

"Now we can let these loose horses go. He shouldn't be able to take the yards and follow them now."

"No, he'll be safe now. If they go out now they might be out of my way when I lead him home."

He opened the gates and let the loose horses out into the paddock, giving them a shoo to start them along out of the way. Acrobat raised his head and watched the horses as they ran, swinging and prancing

about the yard, rushing towards the rails until the pull of the reins brought his head round, keeping Colin busy as he sprang this way and that, sometimes almost on top of him, for Acrobat had no eyes for Colin now, only for the horses, his mates, that were trotting into the timber leaving him to his fate. There was not one horse that looked back for him and whinnied. They trotted away out of sight.

The First Voyagers

(*To the Memory of W. B. Yeats*)

Three men of Ireland left its air
For Alfred's, in a boat quite bare
Of oars and canvas. Muse! relate
How they, for God's love, sought a state
Of pilgrimage, they cared not where.

The boat which carried them was wrought
With two hides and a half; they brought
Food but for seven nights, no more:
The seventh night, the stormy shore
Of Cornwall led to Alfred's court.

I praise this blessed "three in one"—
Macbethu, Dubslane, Malinmun
Their names, but no one knew their boat's:
Like the Argo and the Ark it floats
As long as time's green tide shall run.

ALEXANDER CRAIG

Manning Clark

Re-writing Australian History

It would be appropriate to begin an essay on such a young subject as the writing of Australian history by quoting a powerful passage from one of the oldest faiths in the world. This is from the first book of Samuel: "And it came to pass, when the *evil* spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him."

True, in comparison with religion and music, history has not been one of the great comforters of mankind. But our ideas of the past are part of that great enormous attic of the mind which devours everything which looks as though it might help us to achieve what we are all after—"to be there when everyone suddenly understands what it has all been for". And of course these ideas have a big influence on the way we think and even the way we behave. One of the convictions of the majority of educated people in, say, England or Australia, is that British political institutions and the Protestant religion were the creators of political liberty and material progress.

It was because Macaulay persuaded teachers that the seventeenth century was the decisive period in the moulding of both British political institutions and the Protestant religion that the study of the seventeenth century became the centre of courses of history in the English speaking world and all those areas which came under British influence in the nineteenth century. So men and women studied that era not as a discipline or diversion for the mind, but because such a study would reveal to them the secrets of political liberty and material progress. Men then are refreshed, comforted and instructed by their ideas of the past.

But, this study of British political institutions and the Protestant religion seemed worth while only so long as people believed strongly in political liberty and material progress. When such beliefs perish people still involved in the old mental habits seem to be "Darling Dodos". This is the situation we are now in in Australia. Our ideas

of the past are those of preceding generations. They are not a response to the problems and aspirations of this generation. I believe that the task of the historians for this generation is twofold—to show why the comforters of the past should be dropped, and to put forward new ideas for this generation.

First, let us drop the idea that our past has irrevocably condemned us to the role of cultural barbarians. The past, it is said, has made us resourceful, good improvisers, but not made possible the cultivation of the things of the mind—it has left us coarse and vulgar, forced us to accept the second-rate; more, given us a taste for the second-rate, and a rather perverse pleasure in taking down the mighty and talented from their seats, what Sir Howard Florey called “the apparently endless nagging at anyone who pokes his head slightly above the ruck”. So we can never become cultivated, graceful Europeans; must remain well-fed barbarians forever.

Our ancestors took a terrible drubbing on this score. As early as November 1835 a writer in the *Van Diemen's Land Monthly Magazine* was chiding the locals for their “too engrossing pursuit of riches”, a habit which he said was “prejudicial to the cultivation of science and literature”. The English historian Froude was still harping on the same theme in 1880—reminding Sydneysiders of their lack of “severe intellectual interests”. “They aim,” he wrote, “at little except what money will buy; and to make money and buy enjoyment with it is the be-all and end-all of their existence.” In January 1921 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who, of course, could claim to speak with peculiar authority on the things of the spirit, made this terse comment to an *Age* reporter: “It is the unliveliness and spiritual deadness of the place which gets on my nerves.” But it was left to D. H. Lawrence to go the whole hog. After a quick look at Perth, Sydney and the south coast of New South Wales, he dashed off this account to his sister-in-law in 1922: “This is the most democratic place I have *ever* been in. And the more I see of democracy the more I dislike it. It just brings everything down to the mere vulgar level of wages and prices, electric light and water-closets, and nothing else. You *never* knew anything so nothing, Nichts, nullus, niente, as the life here. They have good wages, they wear smart boots and the girls all have silk stockings. . . . That's what the life in a new country does to you: makes you so material, so *outward*, that your real inner life and your inner self dies out and you clatter around like so many mechanical animals.”

Although a few of our ancestors made rude replies such as that of the bullock driver in *Such is Life*: “But what — good does that do to the likes of us?” the majority were all too willing to confess their

unworthiness. Oddly enough, at the same time as Lawrence was fulminating against our lack of an inner life, Henry Handel Richardson in *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* was pouring out on paper how her father had been tortured by this lack of refinement and things of the spirit in Australia. With more urbanity, Martin Boyd raised the same sort of problem in *The Montforts*, but it was left to Keith Hancock to borrow this idea from the creative writers and circulate it amongst the historians. "This middling standard," he wrote in his *Australia* in 1928, "is characteristic of democracy in Australia . . . they (i.e., the Australians) have accepted the 'middling standard'. They have been willing to water good wine so that there may be enough for everybody. Their democratic theory asserts that the divine average has, potentially, a cultivated palate."

We now no longer need to use cheek and ridicule, or to clutch convulsively on that broken reed that history explains everything, or to pitch our tents in the camp of the Philistines. Europe is no longer the creative centre, the teacher of the world. Today the English send their observers to China. Is it not time for our historians to abandon their preoccupation with the causes and effects of the Australian Cultural Desert?

For one thing, this harping on our pursuit of material gain, and our indifference to the things of the mind, and satisfaction with the middling standard creates the idea that there were no differences in the past—that there is, as it were, a dull and depressing sameness in our history—no great issues, no differences of principle, but always the same pursuit of filthy material gain and only a sordid struggle for power between various groups believing they can show us how to achieve it.

The trouble is that this view encouraged the historians to look in the wrong places for differences—i.e., in politics. There they saw none, and complained about sameness, middling standards and mediocrity. Actually there have been big differences. Take, for example, the differences in values between these two statements:

The first is from the *Hummer*, a newspaper published in Wagga, on 16th January 1892. "Socialism . . . is the desire to be mates, is the ideal of living together in harmony and brotherhood and loving kindness . . . if things were once fixed right we should no more need laws to make healthy men good mates than we need laws to make healthy women good mothers. It is diseased, vicious, evil conditions that breed infanticide and competition, which to me are each about as bad as the other—no better, no worse. Neither of them are being MATES!" That was the faith of one socialist in 1892.

In the same community there were people with quite different opinions on human behaviour and human destiny. Here is an extract from the sermon preached by Cardinal Moran in St. Mary's Cathedral at a mass for the repose of the soul of Cardinal Newman: "In many respects it is an age of ruins, and amid these ruins false scientists will set before us a phantom temple of socialistic atheism, or infidelity, or pantheism, in which selfishness and pride, the idols of a corrupt heart, demand our homage and worship. It is otherwise within the domain of the Catholic Church. She gathers her children around the altar of God to impart to them a divine life, to instruct them in heavenly wisdom, to unfold to them the secret of true happiness, and to lead them to their eternal destiny."

Today there are only two great beliefs in Australia—two tremendous Utopias. There are those who believe in that tremendous dream sketched in the Communist Manifesto. Then there are those who believe in the last paragraph of the Apostles' Creed. Earlier generations worried themselves sick trying to explain why in Australia there was what Professor Hope has called an "Arabian desert of the human mind". This generation was to worry out this question of fundamental faith. That is one of the great differences today—and I suggest that one of the great tasks of our historians is to explain how it came about.

Another significant difference they missed was and is the difference between the Catholic and the Protestant view of the world. I will illustrate this with an example from the history of political liberty—a subject highly coloured in our history books by the Protestant and secular view of liberty. To these historians liberty was a frail but precious bark nosing its way between the Scylla of economic privilege and the Charybdis of the tyranny of the majority. The attitude of the Church was severely snubbed by this school—that is, they did not even deign to mention it. Yet in fact the attitude of the Catholic Church to liberty illuminates two of the great events in the last 100 years—the education controversy and the conscription crisis. They really were big differences. Here is an example of a pronouncement by the Bishops of the Roman Church on liberty. This is from a pastoral to their priests commanding them to forbid their parishioners to read a Church of England periodical: "These roaring lions [they are referring to the Church of England writers] in their audaciousness, usurp everything to themselves; everything must be examined; everything must be weighed by minds, perhaps but lightly imbued with Catholic truth and discipline; and nothing at all reserved for episcopal authority and the loving obedience of the faithful and

confiding soul. Wherefore, most beloved brethren, we, whom the Holy Ghost has appointed to rule the Church of God, cannot in so great a corruption and blindness, do otherwise than arouse, as far as in us lies, the spirit of your devotion . . . to unite with us . . . for the same end. You having been made dispensers of the mysteries of God, be careful that the sheep entrusted to your care, and redeemed with the blood of Christ, be kept from such poisoned pasturage as just alluded to." That pastoral was issued in Melbourne on the occasion of the feast of St. Barnabas in 1858—one year, by the way, before the publication of Mill's essay on Liberty.

This was not the Protestant conception of liberty. As an all too brief example of their view we have the brilliant judgment by Mr. Justice Windeyer in 1888: "The time is surely past when countenance can be given to the argument that knowledge of the truth either in physics or in the domain of thought is to be stifled because its abuse might be dangerous to society. . . . Ignorance is no more the mother of chastity than of true religion."

It was partly because they were not prepared to run the risk of exposing the children of the faithful to teachers with such a conception of liberty that the Catholic Church used extreme measures to force its members into the Catholic Schools. This meant, of course, that one set of values was taught to the Catholics and another to the Protestants. For the former, education was a preparation for eternity: for the latter, the aim was more mundane. It meant, as well, two different views of history. The minds of the Catholic children were steeped in the wrongs of Ireland, and the injustices of English domination: the minds of the Protestants with such works as "Deeds that won the Empire". Compare, for example, the attitude to the war of 1914: "At the beginning of the war," said Archbishop Mannix, "I made up my mind that the recruiting platform was not the place for a Catholic priest or a Catholic bishop." By contrast, in September 1916 Dr. Leeper told the Anglican synod in Melbourne that the war was a religious war. Synod then carried without opposition a resolution in favour of conscription. The *Age* account ends: "The National anthem was then sung."

By 1919 the *Argus* was warning the Protestants that the real grievance of the Irish Catholics was that the Empire was a Protestant Empire with a Protestant monarch (*Argus*, 4th November 1919). And in November of 1919 an elector wrote to the *Argus* urging every returned digger and every Protestant to vote for the Nationalist party, because the Labour party would increase the power and the prominence of the Roman Catholic Church (*Argus*, 8th November

1919). Surely, by now, it has become urgent for the historians to explain why there is a close association between the Catholic Church and the Labour party—and to remind us that there are two traditions in the community with different conceptions of liberty, of equality and of democracy. So let us drop the talk about middling standards, mediocrity, and sameness, and have a look at these differences.

The next comforter I want us to drop is the one about our convict origins. This was created to heal the wounds about the "birth stain". Let me remind you of the picture of transportation designed to comfort such diverse groups as the humanitarians, the Australian nationalists, the radicals, and the old Australian families with a skeleton in the cupboard from the convict era. First we are told that economic changes in England in the eighteenth century forced large numbers of respectable breadwinners and their dependants to choose between starvation, the humiliation of poor relief or theft. Then we are given a harrowing account of peasants crushed by cruel landlords and a monstrous criminal law, transported to Australia for minor offences against property, and there forced to associate with the dregs of humanity from the underworld of the towns. The heroes of this melodrama, the middle-class politicians, then enter on the scene to rescue the victims of such a vicious system by making the criminal law more humane and abolishing transportation. The extreme view was put by the late Professor Wood: "...the atrocious criminals remained in England, while their victims, innocent and manly, founded the Australian democracy." There is only one trouble with this opinion. It is just not true. You will notice one thing about this approach—you are never shown a convict. Instead you are reassured with generalisations such as "innocent and manly" or "village Hampdens" or some other high-flying phrase. Yet the facts were there, if they had wanted to see them. The great majority of the convicts were professional criminals. So instead of stirring up pity for the victims of enclosure, the rise in prices, the inadequate system of poor relief, and instead of castigating the savagery of the English criminal law, let us rather examine the habits and values of the criminals.

That, I can assure you, is far more illuminating, for there you will find the germ of some of the great themes in our history—the attitude to work, the curious paradox of the warm embrace for members of the same group but a snarl for the rest of the world. It is just as illuminating to examine the habits and values of the Irish thieves—partly because their contempt for all the laws of the Anglo-Saxon gave, as it were, a flying start to building up a tradition of lawlessness in Aus-

tralia, but mainly because they were the cause of the coming of the Roman Catholic Church to Australia. This meant not only the Irish brand of Catholicism, but also the close association between that church and one section of the working classes in Australia. In fact, if one dropped the habit of dismissing the whole convict question after due censure of the English governing classes, and some quivers of horror on the vices of convicts, one would have time to acknowledge their contribution. I am thinking not only of their contribution to the wealth of individuals or of society in general. I am thinking also of our extreme good fortune that they did the pioneer work without leaving an ugly social problem for after generations—as, for example, did the negro in the United States and the Kaffir in South Africa.

My next suggestion is that we should drop the idea of the past created and used to support the political and cultural movements at the turn of the century—say, to be safe, 1880-1920. First let me show you how this idea came to birth. There were three movements which were sometimes identical, sometimes separate. First, there were the nationalists. What they were after was put simply by W. J. Sowden: "It had become the fashion to belittle everything Australian. Our wealthier men boasted, when they gave a dinner to their friends, that there was nothing 'Colonial' upon their tables. Colonial wine was sour, Colonial ale was watery, Colonial cheese was rancid . . . Colonial writers were clumsy; the Colonial sun had a sickly glare; the Colonial firmament was an exceedingly poor and shockingly burlesqued copy of the dear old original heavens canopying the dear old original Mother Country!" Like most nationalist movements they were quite impressive when putting their claim for recognition, but often ludicrous when they talked about what they would put in place of the habits of the "dear old mother country". For instance, this same Sowden suggested that the old world "three cheers" be replaced by an Australian "three cooees". Then there was the movement for political democracy, supported by the Liberals and the new political Labour movement. I imagine some of the Liberals, and even the prosaic Labour leaders must have been embarrassed by the language used to describe their creed. Take this piece of doggerel from the *Bulletin* of 8th November 1890:

*Down with old world race dissensions,
Truth and Justice leads the van.
Creed and hate are hell's inventions,
Trust the brotherhood of man.*

This was put more soberly in the Labour paper the Brisbane *Worker* on 5th January 1901, but you can see the idea developing: "Australia has ever been an exemplar to the old lands. . . . By a happy fortune it sprang up free of most of the superstitions, traditions, class distinctions and sanctified fables and fallacies of the older nations."

Notice how this writer is beginning to sketch an idea of the past to fit in with his political aims—to justify and sanctify them. The mundane journalists had their eyes on the present, and were prepared to use the past. The poets went on with astonishing pictures of the future. Do you remember the coy question in Bernard O'Dowd's "Australia"? "Or lurks the millennial Eden 'neath thy breast?"

That is a hackneyed line. I should like, by courtesy of the work of Mr. Vance Palmer, to resurrect from the past O'Dowd's *Lyceum Tutor*. The prophet is asked: "Peer into the future and tell me what you see there." He replies: "The spectacle of a United Australia! Free from all connections with old world tyrannies, rich in possession of a glorious race, free from religious tyranny as from political."

In a moment I will show you how the poets built up an idea of the past to persuade people that history too was on the side of democracy.

But first a word on the third strand in this movement—the creed of the bushman. ". . . a gambler and a nomad" the *Times* correspondent in Australia called him in an article in the *Times* for 31st August 1903. And he went on ". . . in such surroundings he remains perpetually a child. . . . And he is especially like a child in this, that his code of social ethics is based on the family. The bush folk are of his family, every one of them *ipso facto* a mate of his, to be welcomed and treated as such unless some meanness demands expulsion; outsiders are for that very reason to be suspected—people to whom he owes few or no duties except that of hospitality—though the best of them may, after due trial made, be admitted among his comrades. Within that family it is the cardinal virtue to be 'straight', and property is shared to an extent that might almost be called communism." And he went on to point out shrewdly that the bushman's politics were those of a child—that he felt misunderstood, and was therefore inclined to accept the advice and friendship of anyone who was sympathetic.

Now notice that all three trends are anti-English: the last two believe in brotherhood, in being mates, and in equality. Gradually the men holding these opinions built up their own idea of the past. You can see this beginning during their campaign for more political democracy. Remember those words of the Brisbane *Worker*: "Australia has *ever* been an exemplar to the old lands." The poets were

not slow to take up the hint given by these working journalists. So Victor Daley in "A Ballad of Eureka" written in 1901 went further and began to create a pantheon of democratic victories in the past. He settled on the Eureka rebellion in 1854:

*Yet ere the year was over,
Freedom rolled in like a flood:
They gave us all we asked for—
When we asked for it in blood.*

By 1904 the prose publicists were popularising the idea—e.g., Robert Ross' pamphlet *Eureka: Freedom's Fight of '54*. The historians were late into the field—but quickly filled in the details left blank by the poets, and industriously dug up an array of evidence to support their view. So 1850-4 became the great watershed in Australian history—the start of a crusade for the victory of political democracy and equality in the constitutions of the colonies, the ownership of land, education and social conventions.

In fact, by 1948 the idea became so safe, so respectable that the Labour party, with great daring, climbed on the bandwagon and decided to name a Commonwealth electorate after the diggers' leader—Lalor—and a Labour minister justified this by showing that he too accepted this idea of the past: "Democracy in this country," he said, "began at Eureka."

That is the great Australian illusion—the idea that we were pioneers of democracy—that while Europe reverted to the blackest reaction after the abortive revolutions of 1848-51, Australia was the political and social laboratory of the world—with her experiments in democracy, equality of opportunity and *material progress*. And, it is argued, we owe this distinction to the diggers, to Eureka and to a delightfully vague movement called "Chartism". It is time to prick the bubble of this conceit.

First, it ignores the contribution of the period before gold, a great pity, because there, rather than on the goldfields, is the germ of the belief in equality. It was the labour shortage in country districts, rather than imported social and political ideals, which eroded the centuries-old belief in inequality. Second, it over-emphasises the degree of political democracy introduced after the gold rushes. Third, it concentrates attention on the political achievements in the period of gold and thus loses sight of two of the central facts of the period. This was the great period of the squatters—up to 1890. It was also the great period of bourgeois civilisation in our cities—the period in which cathedrals, town halls, universities, schools, banks and pastoral

company buildings were put up as symbols of their faith. There has been nothing like it since. That is the sort of picture one begins to build up, once one drops the idea that the past is a mirror of Australia's radical tradition—and that if one looks very closely one can find reasons for believing that Australians, unlike Europeans, can build a heaven on earth.

Perhaps the most striking example of the way in which this belief in a radical tradition distorts and warps our writing of Australian history is in the interpretation of the Labour movement. The two most illuminating writers on the subject—Mr. V. Gordon Childe and Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick—were (at the time they wrote their works) disappointed radicals. That is to say, they thought of the past as a vast manure heap to fertilise the soil for some future harmony—a harmony which Labour would complete. But Labour, as they knew it, was not worthy of such a high calling, and showed no intention of working for the regeneration of mankind. It was corrupt, opportunist, riddled with bourgeois prejudices. Why? This illustration of the radical past had a disastrous effect on the way in which they answered the question. It gave both of them the illusion that there was a time when Labour was pure, untainted by the world, the flesh and the devil. That was in the 1890's. So Childe said that the history of political Labour was a story of "how a band of inspired socialists degenerated into a vast machine for the capture of political power". Fitzpatrick followed suit. So did all the people who have borrowed so heavily from their work—Portus, Sir Keith Hancock, and others. This makes most of the histories of Labour read rather like the stories of fallen women—with the personality of the writer dictating the final twist: Childe on the iron law of oligarchy, Fitzpatrick's infectious optimism, and G. W. Campbell's belief that the Communists can rescue Labour in very much the same way as Dr. Arnold rescued Rugby. Then again, people who believed that Labour was once a menace assumed that all "fusions" of non-Labour parties were dictated by this need to keep Labour at bay—hence the label of "parties of resistance"—which, incidentally, is grossly unfair to the non-Labour parties.

One final example of the insidious influence of the past as evidence of a radical tradition: The past, we are assured, weighs on the brain of the living. If you give great prestige to the past, or a section of the past, it can have a stultifying effect on the present; that is the effect of a belief in a golden age in the past. This idea of the past not only weighs on the brains of our radicals, but threatens to stop them thinking altogether.

So much for the way in which this illusion of a radical tradition distorts and warps our idea of the past. I doubt, however, whether one would have much success in persuading people to drop it just because it is not true. The truth about the past excites a tiny minority—it is their spiritual pleasure and their bread and butter. There are however more compelling reasons for dropping it. Take, for example, one of the strands in the creed: the ideal of mateship. This was the great comforter of the bushman:

*They tramp in mateship side by side
 The Protestant and the Roman
 They call no biped Lord or Sir
 And touch their hats to no man.*

So Lawson. It was their holy of holies—the last disgrace was to be proved unworthy of “mateship”.

I doubt whether it is wise for us to treat this ideal with such awe and veneration. Like most groups living in conditions of material hardship, they built up a code of love and fellowship for each other and damnation for the rest of the world. This is an all too frequent feature in schemes of brotherhood. You will remember the Jews made this sharp distinction in their version of harmony: “The wolf,” wrote the prophet Isaiah, “shall also dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.” That was, however, reserved for the Jews. As for their neighbours: “Their children . . . shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled and their wives ravished.”

You will find it too in a less exalted form in the ideals of the costermongers of London. The members of society outside their own circle were described with one term of contempt—they were all “bloody aristocrats”. The Australian ideal had this same taint of xenophobia—they were contemptuous of Englishmen and savage on money-lenders and Jews—that was bad enough. But they reserved their bitterest bile for the one group we can ill afford to offend. So the high priest of mateship, William Lane, warned his fellow mates and “dinkum Aussies” about the “piebald brats”. And the bushman’s staple reading matter—the *Bulletin*—sneered at Edward VII’s stupendous nigger empire—“the greatest nigger empire in the world” (22nd February 1902) and reminded mates of the blessings of a White Australia: “A White Australia will never have to fry a nigger at the stake” (25th November 1906). Instead of worshipping at the altar

of mateship, we may find ourselves making expiation and atonement for such arrogance—for are we not that third and fourth generation on whom the sins of the fathers are to be visited?

Nor is that the only reason for jibbing at their ideal. Mateship was the product of a way of life—a mate was a bulwark against loneliness, a help in time of sickness and accident. There was no attempt to make mateship universal in application—to extend it from the people they knew to all people—nor was there any attempt to find universal reasons for believing in it. You do not find them putting forward any metaphysical or religious reasons for their belief. In fact, in comparison with the questions raised by another group of semi-nomads their questions seem shallow and trivial: "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." And this one: "What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?"

Beside such questions, the Lawsonian precept "to call no biped Lord or Sir, and touch your hat to no man" is rather small beer.

Finally a point which should not need underlining. The conditions to which belief in mateship was a response have almost entirely disappeared. This was beginning to happen almost when the ideal was first taking shape:

*Those golden days are vanished
And altered is the scene;
The diggings are deserted,
The camping-grounds are green;
The flaunting flag of progress
Is in the West unfurled,
The mighty Bush with iron rails
Is tethered to the world.*

So Lawson in a nostalgic mood at the turn of the century. In less than a decade Japan showed at Mukden and Tsushima that the material superiority of European civilisation was not unassailable. World war, revolution, and the revival of persecution were soon to sow doubts about its spiritual supremacy. This has gradually caused a change in the subjects chosen by our poets. They, at least, have moved on to other subjects, and other comforters than those of earlier generations. Where the nationalists wrote of happiness founded on material well-being for all, Douglas Stewart writes of a much older theme in the lot of mankind:

*. . . a man must learn
To endure agony, to endure and endure again
Until agony itself is beaten out into joy.*

Where the nationalists preached democracy as the panacea for the ills of society, James McAuley has some doubts:

*The great Unculture that you feared might be
"Drawn to the dregs of a democracy"
Is full upon us; here it sours and thickens
Till every work of art and honour sickens.*

Where they had the sort of confidence of a Rugby blue in the here and now, and a corresponding enthusiasm for life, Kenneth Slessor raises questions about Time and Death. In this extract from "Five Bells" he is putting some questions to a dead friend:

*Why do I think of you, dead man, why thieve
These profitless lodgings from the flukes of thought
Anchored in Time? You have gone from earth,
Gone even from the meaning of a name;
Yet something's there, yet something forms its lips
And hits and cries against the ports of space,
Beating their sides to make its fury heard.*

*Are you shouting at me, dead man, squeezing your face
In agonies of speech on speechless panes?
Cry louder, beat the windows, bawl your name!*

*But I hear nothing, nothing . . . only bells,
Five bells, the bumpkin calculus of Time.*

So the first move to be made in the re-writing of Australian history is to drop the ideas of the past which have comforted and instructed earlier generations. What then shall we put in their place? To that question I have only given snatches of an answer for the simple reason that the whole answer has so far eluded me. But I do believe that it is a great and noble task to answer that question, and that what I have discussed is a necessary preparation for it.

I do not believe that this re-writing will come from the universities, though they will greatly assist the work of the creative writer. It will not come from the universities, because they, instead of

being the fiercest critics of the bankrupt liberal ideal, are its most persistent defenders. Then too they have been made afraid by the angry men of today with their talk about "corrupters of youth". It will not come from the measurers, for they hold the terrible belief that measuring will show there is no mystery. It will not come from the radicals of this generation because they are either tethered to an erstwhile great but now excessively rigid creed, or they are frightened by the self-appointed inquisitors of our morals and political opinions.

History, to be great as history, must have a point of view on the direction of society. It must also have something to say, some great theme to lighten our darkness—that, for example, the era of bourgeois liberalism, of democracy, and belief in material progress is over, and that those who defend such a creed are the reactionaries of today. To be great as literature—the aim of all historians—it must be written by someone who has something to say about human nature, but, above all, it must be written by someone who has pondered deeply over the problems of life and death. Like the fox in the Greek fragment, the historian must know many things, but like the hedgehog, he must know one big thing—and feel it deeply.

While I believe that Australians should drop the comforters of the days of their youth and innocence, I believe even more strongly that the historians should come back to the great themes they abandoned when they joined in the vain search for a science of society.

Nancy Cato

The Trap

ALMOST opposite the lonely shack on the road to the Point, the fish-trap, built ingeniously of airstrip mesh, its stout criss-cross wires rusted to a warm orange by the sea, stretched out into the shallow waters of the bay—wind-rippled and turquoise blue in the Dry, smooth as silver satin in the Wet.

Just now it was the Dry, and the curving beach of yellow sand shimmered and almost smoked in the sun's heat, concentrated by the blue burning-glass of the sky. The tide was far out, leaving dry the mud of the mangrove swamps to beyond the Point, exposing sand-spits and shoals where the soldier-crabs marched and turned, and leaving shallow pools about the far end of the fish-trap. The long entrance-ways of the trap and the two enclosures to which they led, the farther one almost a hundred yards from the shoreline at high tide, looked like a long jetty abandoned by the sea.

There was nothing to keep the fish in, but once they entered the shoreward openings they were lost, their obstinate urge to make for deep water leading them to press on, instead of turning back before the water went down and it was too late.

Over the soft coarse sand beyond the reach of the tides, and the low sandhills covered with purple-flowered convolvulus, a roll of airstrip mesh had been laid. Tracks turning from the road showed that it was often used.

The sound of an engine, the rattling of loose parts over the corrugated road, and a cloud of bright red dust, marked the approach of a vehicle. Soon a khaki-painted utility bounced over the sandhills to the beach. At the same moment a woman's figure appeared on the front landing of the house, which had a flight of wooden steps, and, though perched on twelve-foot-high stilts, only just cleared the growth of rank grass and shrubs surrounding it on three sides.

The utility drove on to firm, wet sand. An Air Force man, casually dressed in khaki shorts and an open tunic over a bare chest, jumped down and went into the first of the maze-like openings through which

the fish could not escape. He came out with a shrug and a spreading of the hands expressive of "no luck". From the outer enclosure he emerged with the same gesture.

When he came back, the driver, a young R.A.A.F. officer in a peaked cap and buttoned tunic, leant with one sun-brown forearm on the steering wheel, and pushed the cap on to the back of his head. The two of them turned and stared back at the shack. The woman could be seen now moving about underneath it.

"There hasn't been a fish in the trap since they came here, blast them!" said the young officer, wiping with the back of his hand at the sweat beading his upper lip.

"We've never actually caught them at it."

"No, but her tracks are always on the beach, leading down into the wet sand. I reckon he sends the woman down because he thinks we'd be soft with her."

It was still early, but they had met the husband's truck on the road to town, going hell-for-leather over the corrugations to avoid their jarring. He left early to work on the dam, and didn't usually return before dusk.

The young officer adjusted the dark glasses on his sharp, square-cut nose. He had weak eyes and the dark glasses covered spectacles; he had an idea that they made him look like General MacArthur. He hadn't the General's imposing physique, but his stocky figure was solid-looking, his chin was square, and his mouth straight.

He looked back again at the shack. A white sheet was blowing out from the line strung between the shack and the palm-tree in front.

"I'm going to tackle her about it now," he said and turned the utility.

Bumping over the sand ridges he felt his heart beginning to bump a little, too, and silently cursed himself for a fool. He had noticed the woman appreciatively, of course—they all had—flaunting about in her bright skirt, with her long dark hair and slim brown legs. Once, driving past to the deserted station on the Point, he had glimpsed a white figure flitting for shelter from the open shower under the house.

He left the utility on the road and walked over the flattened grass, giving a purposeful hitch to his shorts. The woman was still under the house, washing clothes in some improvised tubs on the ground. She stood up, slowly wiping her hands on the full skirt, which was banded horizontally and dazzlingly in purple, green, yellow, red and white. She smiled inquiringly. He noticed that she had a lovely mouth, wide but finely cut, and that her long, dark-fringed eyes were blue.

He had been prepared to find that, like most of the women up here, she had a touch of the tar-brush.

He kept his mouth straight and adjusted his dark glasses sternly.

"Good-morning," he said. "Ah . . . the fish have been disappearing from our trap lately. Have you seen anyone interfering with it?"

She opened her clear eyes wide and shook her head, still smiling. He felt a half-angry urge to make her speak. Her charm would disappear as soon as she opened her mouth, no doubt. "Your husband not about?"

A smiling shake of the head, accompanied by the lift of one eyebrow. Curse her, he thought. She went back to one of the tubs and crouched beside it, rubbing at the clothes within. He watched, fascinated, the soap-bubbles clinging to her smooth brown arms.

"The R.A.A.F. built the trap, you know," he said. "It cost us a lot of work and we count on it to vary the diet a bit. M. and V. gets pretty monotonous, especially in a stinking hole like this." He let all his hatred of the heat, all his nostalgia for his southern home get into the last words.

The woman—she was only a girl really, he saw now, not more than twenty or perhaps twenty-four—twisted a soapy shirt and with a dexterous movement flung it into a bowl of clean water with a splash.

"I like it," she said quietly. "Perhaps because I'm used to it." She had the sallow complexion of a woman who has lived long in the tropics.

He groaned inwardly. There was nothing wrong with her voice. Unthinkingly he squatted down on his heels, in the comfortable pose which camp life had taught him, with his arms between his knees. He poked at a stray green ant with a piece of stick.

"I come from Melbourne. God, how I'd love to feel a good cold, sleety wind blowing down Collins Street." He scratched with the stick in the hard ground under the house. The drops of sweat fell off his nose and chin on to the ground.

He stared at her from under his dark brows, and then from out of the corner of his eye he saw his offsider beginning to climb out of the utility. He stood up abruptly.

"Well, I wish you'd keep a look-out when the tide is out, if we're not here; and tell me if you see anyone ratting our trap. They'd better look out," he added darkly.

She replied only with her enigmatic smile.

That night, lying under his stifling sandfly net on the hard straw palliasse, he could not get her out of his mind. He thought fiercely of his fiancée in Melbourne, of Flora's fresh pink cheeks and dark

eyes, but instead he saw the unknown girl, the coloured stripes of her skirt, the white silk jumper covering her small breasts, the dark fluff of her hair, her long blue eyes and mocking smile; and as soon as he fell asleep he dreamed that there was a big fish in the trap, and when he went to get it it was the girl, smiling at him with her red lips. . . .

Though low tide came early in the morning now, he saw her several times on the beach, wandering about on the sand-flats in a brief sunsuit. Then came the dodge tides, and it was dark when they inspected the trap; they found a few fish in it. One morning there was a small long tom wedged high up in one of the enclosures, where it had swum half through the mesh and got stuck. It was higher than his head, showing where the tide had been up to overnight.

The girl was coming down to the beach as they drove up, and he handed the small fish to her.

"Here, it's not enough for our mess. You might as well have it."

She smiled. "Thanks. M. and V. does get a bit monotonous, doesn't it?"

For the first time he allowed himself to smile back at her, showing his even white teeth. He had suspected her unjustly.

Perhaps it was that big sea-eagle sitting on the post out there, with his buff wings and white breast, who was to blame; yet he couldn't pull big fish through the wire. But hermit-crabs? He had seen a fish pretty well eaten away by crabs.

"What I really miss most is fresh milk," she said.

"Milk? I can get you some. We've got a herd of cows inland a bit, though they don't give much milk in the Dry. I'll bring you some tomorrow."

She was not on the beach next morning. He and his two passengers rushed excitedly to the outer trap to see what the big fish was there, but it was only a ground shark. The tide was already on the turn, and the water was making about the outer trap. He stepped carefully past the patch of quicksand. A ripple came at his foot with a little menacing rush. Though he was not unduly imaginative, he shivered. There was something inexorable about the daily movement of the sea. Tide waits for no man. . . . No, what was it? Time and tide wait for no man.

Next morning was misty and pungent with the smoke of grass-fires burning across the bay. He drove up the road and parked there,

taking a carefully-wrapped lemonade bottle of milk up to the house. The men jeered at him. He took no notice but climbed the wooden steps and handed her the bottle through the open door.

She did not invite him in. He sat on the landing, in the shade of the palm-tree whose fronds clacked in the dry wind, and talked to her through the open door. He told her that he had taken the milk off the ice, and she drank some from a thick enamel mug while he watched her with a pleased air.

He seemed nervous. He could not sit still, but strode up and down the landing, talking through the doorway and the open louvres, speaking jerkily, adjusting his dark glasses and wiping the sweat from his clean-shaven upper lip. She drank the milk slowly, preserving her air of calm and secret amusement.

She was conscious, conscious all the time of her attraction for these men starved for a white woman's company, bored by the routine of their lives now that the war was over. He knew it and in a way hated her for it, yet it added to her attractiveness; she had the conscious grace of a cat which knows it is being watched.

For a week there were no fish in the trap, night or day; but one morning there was an early fisherman on the rocks farther along the beach, and he strolled up to the utility.

"That trap's bin done already, mate. Fine big barramundi they got out there this mornin'."

"They? Who? This trap's ours."

"Yours? Thought it belonged to the shack up there."

The young officer's mouth became a hard line. He looked along the beach to where the girl was gathering driftwood, the backwash of war with which the beach was strewn.

"You go up to the shack and have a look round," he said to the two aircraftmen with him, "and I'll keep her talking."

He found it easy to talk to her, but hard to keep his eyes from the length of neat limb exposed by the mannish white shirt and khaki shorts she wore. Glancing restlessly back at the shack, he saw the men come out from underneath with something long and shining between them. Still talking, he led her back over the sand-ridges. They walked over the rusted iron mesh, across the red dusty road, and were confronted by the triumphant aircraftmen bearing a three-foot barramundi.

"Well?" He turned to look at her sternly. "That bloke down there told us a barramundi was taken out of the trap this morning."

She turned wide blue eyes upon them. "Wherever did you find that?"

"Under a tub, under the house there."

"Well, I can't think how it got there."

"Perhaps it swam!" he said sarcastically, and turned on his heel. They trooped to the utility and got in. Before he drove off he turned to look at the house; the girl had disappeared up the steps.

"It beats me," he said, "how anyone with eyes like that can be such a damned liar."

Next day there was quite a good haul of medium-sized fish in the trap. The welcome change in the diet, with fried fish instead of tinned dog on the menu, only whetted their appetites for more. They drove out to the beach twice a day with renewed eagerness, whereas they had lately been making only one visit in the mornings. On the second day they found two big barramundi, one in each trap. The house among the long grass appeared deserted.

"Maybe they've left," said the young officer, glancing up at the house through his dark glasses and wondering why he felt a sense of desolation. "The husband must have been taking the fish into town and selling it. They've obviously been getting good hauls."

"I heard that he isn't her husband. They say she's been drifting round the north for years, taking up with different men. She'd even have taken a Jap on if they'd got here."

The other scowled. "Oh, I dunno. She doesn't look such a hard case."

The next day there were no fish in the trap, and the next and the next. At first they took it as a natural turn of the luck, but after two weeks of drawing blanks they were ready to give it away. The morning low tide was at five now, which meant turning out uncomfortably early. And five in the afternoon was an awkward time, and extremely hot.

On the fifteenth day in succession, coming down in the heat of the afternoon, they found nothing in the trap. Nor was there any sign of the girl, though today her bright skirt flapped on the line in the dry trade-wind with some other clothes. Inexplicably irritated by one absence as much as the other, the young officer said, "To hell with the fish. Let 'em have them. It's not worth coming all this bloody way for nothing; I've had it."

"We ought to set a trap for *them*, the ——s," suggested somebody darkly. "Wait behind a sandhill with a revolver, and when they come down for the fish . . ."

"Ar, it's not worth while. We'd only catch the girl, anyway." His eyes narrowed behind the dark glasses, and he added, roaring up the

engine so that it almost drowned his words, "I've a good mind to make her pay for them, though."

"How're you going to make her pay for fish she has already? She'd only pull a tale about having no money."

He set his teeth as he bungled a change of gear.

"She can pay in kind, can't she?"

The next day he came rattling over the corrugations, alone. It was late afternoon. He had wanted to come all day, but he had invented various duties to keep him at headquarters.

He stopped and looked along the beach. No sign of her. The shack looked deserted, too. He walked up the twelve wooden steps and entered for the first time. His feet echoed loudly on the bare floor. The one big room was neatly swept, but the bunks were unmade. A cloth spread on a table under the windows was decorated with a pile of shells and coral, and some food lay under a net. He went through to the tiny kitchen. No one.

From the landing he shaded his eyes against the glare of the westerling sun and looked along the beach. Only the heat-shimmer moved on the sand, and a sea-eagle sat on a post near the end of the trap. The flat, still sea was slowly receding, until the end of the trap was almost dry. There might be a fish in it. Well, he'd trick her this time; go down before the water had gone, when she'd be scared to enter the trap . . . or would she?

He ran down the steps, half-relieved not to have found her at home. He drove on to the wet sand and got out. Yes, there was something big in the end enclosure—it looked like something big. As he moved forward a thought checked him. It might be a crocodile.

But no, he could see more clearly now. It was big all right, some coloured tropical fish, striped and banded like . . . God! Like that girl's skirt.

He ran forward clumsily. His feet sucked in the wet sand. His heart had begun to thud, his mouth was dry, his palms sweated. Yes, there was no doubt it was the striped skirt, floating wetly, its colours darkened by water. Beside it lay what looked like a bunch of brown seaweed.

He wound his way into the trap and snatched her up, but the stiff body seemed suddenly to resist him. One hand was clenched around an upright. He struggled to unflex the fingers. Still he could not raise her. One leg was caught by the ankle beneath the cross-wires, firmly fixed into the yielding sand by long stanchions. He ran to the utility for a crowbar, and levered the wires up. The flesh was

rubbed raw about her ankle, cut deeply with her struggles to be free. Her hands were scratched, the fingernails broken and filled with sand, showing how frantically she had dug only a few hours before.

He shuddered and leant against the wires a moment, feeling sick. If he had been any later . . . if he hadn't come this afternoon . . . the sea-eagle . . . and then the crabs.

His imagination presented to his shrinking mind the image of her lonely death: of the first panic at the yielding sand, the struggles making the foot sink deeper, the frantic efforts to free it giving way to a more philosophical wait for the help that must come. How she must have been even a little embarrassed, waiting for the R.A.A.F. men to come and catch her red-handed in their fish-trap.

And then the cold fear growing, growing, as the first little ripples made their innocent-ugly rushes about her feet, and the water deepened inexorably, and no one came.

If he had not struggled with himself so long, if he had come earlier, as he had wanted to come, and found her in time, what might or might not have happened? Strangely, under all the horror of the moment he felt a new lightness, as though a heavy weight had been lifted; he had escaped.

The fish which she had come to get, and which had died hours before her, trapped by the tides of air, lay neglected in the shallow water that remained. He picked up the girl's cold form. Artificial respiration? He would try, but it was obviously too late. He averted his eyes from the pinched, blue face—she was no longer pretty now—and carried the body up the beach.

James Pollard

Bobtail Walkabout

Ugo lay upon his belly and chin in the sun-warmed middle of the road.

A motor-vehicle approached and roared over him, and he spun in a whirl of dust. He crawled a step or two, then bellied the road again.

In the course of an hour three automobiles tumbled him over and dusted him, and miraculously left him unharmed. After which, Ugo waddled from the roadway, across a strip of scrubby land, beneath a wire fence, and into a garden. There he sampled a flower or two and gratified his sweet tooth, swallowed a caterpillar to appease his need of meat, then coming on a gigantic fungus that was disarranging a clump of anemones, he settled down to gorge his fill. Ugo was by preference a vegetarian.

Having demolished the toadstool, he ambled to a gravel path, rounded a stony corner and stood to regard a ginger cat, which was gathering on its toes as though to pounce. It remained where it was, however, thoughtful and wide of eye. Evidently, what had come around the corner was not what the cat had expected.

Ugo opened his mouth and there yawned at the cat a cavern flaming blue and yellow. Puss arched herself, advanced with a skittish sidestep, and stood over Ugo swearing.

The goanna took a deep breath, one that swelled out his sides until it seemed they must split—a breath that raised his belly from the ground and set his crooked legs at tension. At the same time he lifted his head. Then as he snapped open his mouth he blew such a mighty puff of wind into the cat's face as sent her leaping a yard backward.

Puss relaxed slowly. She sat upon her haunches and washed her face.

Ugo waddled on his way.

When the apricots were turning golden, Ugo strolled through a strip of drying grass and over soil cultivated beneath fruit-trees. There

he demonstrated that he had a taste for fruit, eating only the ripe windfalls.

During many succeeding days he might often have been observed in that orchard. Ugo seldom troubled to hide. Footfalls on the ground, a dog's bark or the cry of an eagle were sounds that made him immobile; and then his blotched coat of brown and yellow and olive so blended with his surroundings that at a few paces he might easily be mistaken for a stick or a few stones, or a pattern of sunlight and shadow.

He ate apricots and plums, certain fungus growths that he found sprouting from the soil or lurking in stone-heaps or woody litter about the edges of the orchard, and he munched a flower occasionally and any grub or worm that failed to wriggle out of his way. Since he was too slow to be a hunter, meat did not form this lizard's major food, yet what he chanced on he received gratefully. Once it was a grasshopper that blundered into his capacious mouth; and once he woke from a nap to find that a spider had fastened a line of its web on the point of his snout. The grasshopper reminded him of lettuce leaves and turnip tops; and the spider descending a line to discover the cause of certain vibrations to its web, and walking into Ugo's mouth, recalled to him the taste of white ants, a number of which the spider had lately eaten, having spun a web in the way of a flying swarm.

In the time when the first apples were being blown, Ugo met Osu. The apples that dropped were but half-grown and green but they afforded the goanna a change of fare. He was crunching a mouthful of apple when over a ridge of earth a few feet before him he saw an apple rise and then discerned a head like his with the fruit in its jaws.

Ugo waddled across. Osu dropped her prize and eyed him. He observed her; and perceived with swift miracle of vision that Osu was a female bobtail.

Ugo reflected perhaps that he was some time out of his winter's torpidity and that the season was pressing on. He put his head at an angle and his eyes closed to slits; and from the slits there gleamed a gleam.

Osu remained still, low to the ground. Her head was tilted suspiciously, it seemed.

Ugo walked twice around Osu and Osu turned twice on her toes. In the course of a third circle she became dizzy and rested for a moment. Thereupon Ugo took her stump of tail between his jaws and bit not hard but firmly.

Followed then the courtship walk of two bobtailed goannas. One

with its tail in the jaws of the other, they waddled swaying across a corner of the orchard, through a strip of grass, around a fencepost and along the edge of the tilled land. They kept an even pace, rather quicker than was their habit, and they paused not until they reached a sunny spot like many a spot crossed during their peregrination. The amble appeared aimless. When at last they parted they bellied into the soil, closed their eyes and drowsed. It was not until another noon-tide bathed the earth with light and warmth that Ugo and Osu fulfilled the purpose of their springtime meeting among the wind-blown apples.

During subsequent forages Ugo added a sup or two of orange juice to his menu, journeyed from orchard to forest and sampled scrub-leaves and wild flowers and a couple of bardee grubs nosed from out a rotting blackboy-tree. His days were full of peace; he fared well and grew fat.

Toward the end of one hot day, Ugo knew a need of drink. He entered a garden but failed to find sprinkler or dripping tap. Hearing a rooster's call, he turned in the direction whence it came, rounded a corner of a shed, and followed his nose. He squeezed slowly through the two-inch mesh of a netting fence, eyed peevishly and aloofly by a number of fowls, and after some slow casting about he found a trough of water.

Ugo drank his fill. After ten somnolent minutes in the sun, he drank again. Then he waddled heavily back to the fence. Having got his head and forearms through the mesh, he began to push and squeeze, bore the netting an inch or two forward, and was then lifted off his feet and swung back behind his scratch line. But he was not left free because the wire was tight behind his armpits.

He tried again with like result. Then he tried cautiously. He crawled slowly forward until the netting strained at his swollen middle and his lungs laboured and he was light on his feet; and then with a super-reptilian effort he dug in his toes and gave a heave.

Alas! he was turned back on his tail, still snared by the mesh, until he shrunk sufficiently to escape. Then he found a spot where he could nose under the wire, and left the fowl-yard a wiser goanna.

Another morning later in the summer disclosed Ugo within another garden plucking a green tomato hung low to the ground. A pace more and he could have had two tomatoes, but at a farther distance he espied melon flowers. They signalled him glinting yellow in the sun. He knew them to be sweet; and he crawled to the vine and ate three or four.

Wandering on, he reached a refuse heap and found a bone, three

inches of rib bone, bare and dry. It was the sort of bone a cow with a depraved taste would have nuzzled and blown upon and then swallowed with a low of delight. Ugo's taste was never depraved, but vegetable foods left him with a deficiency which an occasional bone could supply. Gathering this one into his mouth, he tried to swallow it. One end of the bone was protruding from his mouth as he glanced about and observed a rock some three feet away.

Swaying like a drunken cart-horse, Ugo hurled himself full tilt at that rock and bashed it with the bone in his jaws.

A tremor shook the rock. Ugo recoiled. The bone had disappeared; and there might have been observed in the next moment or two some convulsions about Ugo's throat and a look of agony in his eyes. Then his blue tongue wavered between his lips and he was normal again.

He sagged down—and jerked up, his mouth agape. A long, thin, shadowy form weaved toward him, and he was due to engage in the fight of his life.

No tiger snake sunning itself on a stone could be expected to endure being jolted out of its nap and off its couch without becoming irritated. And no irritated tiger snake could be expected to pass any form of life peacefully.

Scu was irritated. Spotting Ugo, the snake had no feeling but to bite. At him then!

As for Ugo—Ugo never wanted to fight; but by jingo if he did!

The gliding form furrowed the grass. A gleaming flat head reared above the bobtail, then struck—and recoiled. As well strike iron as the goanna's horny armour.

Scu's head and neck waved and wavered over Ugo, and Ugo on the ground swung this way and that with blue and yellow mouth yawning. Scu was wise enough to pass over that yawning mouth to strike again but struck only at impenetrable horn and bone. Again and again he struck and recoiled, avoiding the bobtail's clumsy efforts to close on him. But becoming more furious as he failed, Scu became also less careful, lay in with a will to the fight and mouthed viciously along the goanna's back. And as he turned and writhed, a portion of his length whipped before Ugo's head—and Ugo fastened on the snake's middle.

For some minutes as the fury of battle engulfed him, life for Ugo was more desperate than ever it was for the fellow who got hold of the tail of a bear. Frequently he was off the ground tossing in snake coils, and as frequently the same coils thrashed him in the dust. Often again he was twisted and doubled and rolled on by the writhing

snake, and dragged from under upside-down. But all the time he hung on as though his jaws were locked.

Inevitably, the actions of Scu changed from those of a snake in the quick to those of a snake with a broken back. They became convulsive, and though for a time they had thrust and power, they were mechanical, uncontrollable, and slowing.

Ugo crawled a few paces and rested, weary. After some minutes he waddled a few more paces and rested again. So, haltingly, he drew away from the reptile whose life was ending.

In the shadow of a lucerne-tree he halted to survey the netting of a fowl run. Crawling beneath the wire, he went to water, and having drunk, he cast about the yard, where before he had picked up scraps of food.

A dozen or more hens eyed him bleakly but without challenge.

Crawling around the corner of a box, the goanna came face to face with a sitting hen. Lizard and bird observed one another in still silence. Time waited on discovery. Then Ugo, perhaps divining the presence of eggs or perhaps enticed only by the mingled odours of hay and the brooding bird, moved slowly closer.

The bird sat tight. Ugo nosed up to the edge of the box and over the edge. The hen chirruped her irritation and pecked him. The armoured Ugo ignored the peck. He nosed slowly under the bird. She lifted slightly, protesting again, and pecked once more. When the lizard had vanished she sat half-crouched for a few moments with her head disbelievingly aslant, then slowly relaxed and became again an absorbed, introspective old hen.

Ugo treated himself to half the setting, part-addled and highly flavoured, then peacefully withdrew though pecked along his length as he emerged. The hen started up this time and used her beak with vigour. She appeared not merely puzzled but outraged; and yet when Ugo passed beyond her reach she settled down wearing an air of triumph.

Some time later Ugo was walking by a wood-heap when a patter of soft feet, a scurry of gravel and a looming shadow halted him with uplifted gaping mouth.

A bark begun as a challenge ended in a yelp of amaze, and the dog stood four-square, gaping in turn. For a moment only. Then it began to practise its entire repertoire of sound, the while prancing in a circle with tail beflagged.

Ugo gyrated on his belly, menacing with his fiery mouth the snapping jaws that threatened him. Once the dog's teeth did close on his neck, nipped and let go. A second time they closed, but with

bad judgment; and as bark turned to clamour, Ugo clamped on the dog's sidewise, described a parabola over a tossing head, while the farmside echoed the din of a dog in a panic, overwhelmed with rage and pain and sorry helplessness.

Ugo flew a dozen feet through the air but squirming and turning so that he landed rightside-up.

Descending on to the wood-heap, he promptly slithered far down and under a tangle of wood as his enemy, come to renew the assault and making the farm ring with a new fury of sound, leapt to the top of the heap.

A patter of other feet approached and a young human voice inquired of the dog, which answered excitedly as it thrust nose and head and forefeet among the pieces of wood.

Ugo lay low. Dog and youth made a few ineffectual pokings, the one with nose and paw and the other with a stick, then desisted and retired in search of game promising more fun than a reluctant bobtail.

On the morrow as he tasted cucumber flowers in a field, Ugo met by chance another female of his kind. As he eyed her and considered the line of his approach, Auda the wedge-tailed eagle swooped from the blue and took her away from before him. Feeling the wind of that cyclonic visitation, Ugo licked his lips, gone suddenly dry. He crawled away hurriedly, but relaxed when he came on a sunlit gravel road.

He bellied himself there for soothing.

Presently a motor-car hurtled toward him; and in the whirling wake of it he thrice rolled over.

Having recovered his balance, Ugo again licked dry lips. He crawled on across the road, and soon was lost in shadowed bushland.



Return

A far-off boat moves on the morning sea.
That broad and equal monotone of light
is drawn to focus; purpose enters in.
Its unity becomes duality,
and action scars perfection like a pin.

The mind in contemplation sought its peace—
that round and calm horizon's purity,
which, known one instant, must subsist always.
But life breaks in again, time does not cease;
that calm lies quiet under storms of days.

So moves in me time's purpose, evil and good.
Those silent tracts eternity may give;
but the lame shadow stumbles at my back,
still sick for love; the battle of flesh and blood
will hardly come to quiet while I live.

JUDITH WRIGHT

Flesh

1. The Hand

Put your hand out, and hold it still, and look.
Like something wild picked up and held too long
it loses truth; light fades on the stopped wing.
Infinite cleverness pivoted on a clever stalk,
it lives in time and space, and there is strong;
but draw it outside doing into being,
it pales and withers like a sea-star dying.

The hand is drawn from the flesh by its own uses.
Powers unchannelled, shapes unshaped await it;
and what has long since happened and been completed
lies in it and directs its bone and chooses
stress and muscle. Textures thrust to meet it,
for it is their answer; stuff that cannot move
moves under the hand that is all it knows of love.

Do not look at me, the hand says. I am not true
except as means. I am the road, the bridge,
not starting-point nor goal nor traveller.
I am not you, the doer, nor what you do.
I am extension; I am your farthest edge.
I am that which strokes the child's hair, tenderly—tenderly—
and drives the nail into the hand stretched on the tree.
My shape is action. Look away. Do not look at me.

2. *The Body*

I am the depth below. You would do well
to look down, sometimes. I can be your tree,
solid in the gale—if you consent to be flower,
seed, and fruit. But you don't believe in me
except as crass and suffering and to be suffered,
or instrument of your uncertain love.

I am your notion of hell
and your tool for discovering heaven. But perched on me
you lean out with your arrogant polished eye—
trying to be God. Look down; remember where you are.
I am the strata that reach from earth to star
and the great cliff down which your father Adam fell.

You would do well to look down.
More was built into me than quickset night.
God walked through all my ages. He set in me
the key that fits the keyhole; use it right
and eternity's lightning splits the rock of time.
And there I was begun and so begotten
in that unspeakable heart of flame.
From that light where flesh on flesh was welded
the world itself unfolded.
Look down through me on the light you have forgotten.

I am your blundering kind companion.
 I am your home that keeps out bitter weather.
 I am the perilous slow deposit of time's wisdom.
 You are my threat, my murder. And yet, remember,
 I am yourself. Come, let us live together.

3. The Face

The face turns inward and down
 on the head's bud;
 curves to its inner world
 of shaping flesh and blood;
 is closed like an eyelid; blind;
 is made before its mind.

Birth draws the stalk out straight
 and the face wakes.

Naked in a passion of light
 its long composure breaks.
 It writhes to regain sleep;
 but life has stung too deep,

and flesh has now become
 time's instrument
 for the first task that is set
 and the easiest learnt.

Two shapes obsess it; need,
 and the need satisfied.

The mirror answers the face:
 an animal in a cave
 that lusts and tastes and sings.
 A hill that breathes the air;
 a glance that looks for love;
 two crystals where all things
 leech at the panes and stare.

What shall the face pursue
 that drinks of time and event
 and changes as it drinks?

What was it the flesh meant
 foreshadowing in the womb
 the person not yet come?

The face that turns to the world
opens itself to ask.
Look at it now, before
it learns it is a mask:
for eyes take light like dew
while their glance is new.

It takes out of the air
All it can know.
Whatever look turns on it,
that look it will grow.
So some learn love, and some
can never find a home.

The face becomes its world.
It is the moving field
printed by days grown common
and the unmastered night—
by unacknowledged need
and fear of its own deed:

yet knows that there have been,
flowering the world's dull years,
faces more true than stars
and made of purer light;
and they may happen again.
O may they happen again.

JUDITH WRIGHT

For the Loved and the Unloved

Love in his alteration
invents the heart to suit him:
its season, spring or autumn,
depends on his decision.

The rose he sets his light in
increases by his brooding.
What colour the sepal's hiding
not even the tree is certain.

The bud bowed in and folded
round love's illumination
works by a light no vision
into our world has welded;

and nerve and artery follow
a track no mind is treading:
and what's the compass guiding
the far-returning swallow?

The roads unwind within us.
It is not time's undone us,
but we ourselves, who ravel
the thread by which we travel.

JUDITH WRIGHT

The Lamp and the Jar

You are that vessel full of holy oil;
Wisdom, unstirring in its liquid sleep,
Hoarded and cool, lucid and golden green,
Fills the pure flanks of the containing stone;
Here darkness mellows what the sunlit soil
To purposes unknown, for ends unseen,
Produced, and labour of unnumbered men.
All the unthinking earth with fret or toil
Reared, ripened, buried in the earth again,
Here lives, and living, waits: this source alone
Distils those fruitful tears the Muses weep.

And I, the lamp, before the sacred ark,
The root of fire, the burning flower of light,
Draw from your loins this inexhaustible joy.
There the perpetual miracle of grace
Recurs, as, from its agony, the flame
Feeds the blind heart of the adoring dark;
And there the figures of our mystery,
The shapes of terror and inhuman woe,
Emerge and prophesy; there with the mark
Of blood upon his breast and on his brow,
An unknown king, with my transfigured face,
Bends your immortal body to his delight.

A. D. HOPE

The Dream

Unable to speak, exhausted by the search,
He stood and stared his love and disbelief
For the incredible luck that brought them there;
The clatter and fury of the endless march
Now stilled, the whisper of his inward grief
Dripped on and filled the cave of his despair.

"Be quick! You have so little time," she said,
"Listen! My terror stands breathing on the stair;
And soon you must go back into the storm.
Darling!" she said, and made her body bare
And drew him down beside her on the bed,
"See, you are cold; come to my heart, be warm!"

Unable to speak, he touched her with his hand,
Fingering the witnesses of cheek and breast.
The bloody anguish breeding in the bone
Told its long exile, told of all the lands
Where the unresting heart, seeking its rest,
Finds always that its language is unknown.

They knew in that fierce, shuddering first embrace,
Clearer than words, more desperate than a cry,
All that their spirits had borne and could not say:
Journeys that always led to the wrong place,
The maps whose promises turned out a lie,
The messages that always went astray.

There in each other's gaze they saw the vast
Deserts of sand where round them wheeled and swept
Voices of pleading or insane abuse;
A jungle of hands clutched at them as they passed
Breaking the fingers they could not unloose;
And eyes of malice watched them while they slept;

And golden bodies, counterfeiting love
Won them with grace or pity—they woke to know
Mechanical, alien arms about them close,
The piston sliding in its greasy groove;
The masks of beauty fell aside, to show
An ulcer of pleasure eating away the nose,

The maggots writhing in a fly-blown eye—
 There they lost hope, and the sane world forgot,
 And nightmare grew at last to be their home.
 Mysterious names were scrawled across the sky;
 They tried to leave but found their passports not
 In order, or the permit had not come;

And had set out at last alone, at night,
 To be sent back: the frontier had been closed.
 Clutching their parcels they were made to wait
 For years in rooms blazing with too much light;
 Were called for questioning, or, while they dozed,
 Wakened by blows and screaming at the gate.

Their names were shouted; they were led away.
 The guards were friendly, but they did not know
 The destination, or they would not tell;
 In storm and terror and boredom, day by day
 They struggled over passes deep with snow
 Or plodded across deserts they knew too well.

Year after year the march went on: they grew
 Accustomed to the noise, the dust, the chain,
 The never being alone, the senseless haste
 From nowhere to some end that no one knew.
 They lay at night and heard the torrents of rain
 Lashing the roofs, a fury of ruin and waste.

One day among the mountains, in the rough
 Streets of a steep, unknown, unfriendly town
 Marching at dusk, the labouring columns met.
 Their eyes held; they stood still; the chain dropped off;
 They looked about them and they were alone;
 She smiled and spoke his name; her eyes were wet.

Unable to speak, he touched her with his hand;
 Unhurried and unafraid they moved away.
 The doors stood wide; they climbed the silent stair.
 There the room opened like their promised land.
 Quiet as death he stood and watched the way
 Her fingers moved as she let down her hair.

So close they lay; so cold, so fierce, so still
Their joy! Their dream so deep, so strong and full
Folded them nearer and remade their world.
She felt her breasts against his breast, the thrill
Of his quick breath; he felt, at last, the dull
Beat of his blood, her arms about him curled;

And little by little she warmed him with her love;
The lineaments of grace, the gesture of peace,
Became their language, their enchanted speech,
Clothed her with courage and filled her body and drove
Away his guilt and gave his gift release;
And all their acts were answered, each to each.

She felt the frosty rigor that bound him turned
To ease—But the bright warmth she gave became
A fever of heat. In wonder and dismay
She felt him filled with fire; her flesh was burned
And from his mouth an unendurable flame
Scorched her, and she cried out and shrank away

And leapt up; for the bed was all alright—
Unable to speak he rose and left her there;
Unable to meet her eyes that gazed with such
Anguish and horror, went out into the night
Burning, burning, burning in his despair
And kindling hurt and ruin at his touch.

A. D. HOPE

The Death of the Bird

For every bird there is this last migration;
Once more the cooling year kindles her heart;
With a warm passage to the summer station
Love picks the course in lights across the chart.

Year after year a speck on the map, divided
By a whole hemisphere, summons her to come;
Season after season, sure and safely guarded,
Going away is also coming home.

And being home, memory becomes a passion
 With which she feeds her brood and straws her nest.
 Aware of ghosts that haunt the heart's possession
 And exiled love mourning within her breast.

The sands are green with a mirage of valleys;
 The palm-tree casts a shadow not its own;
 Down the long architrave of temple and palace
 Blows a cool air from moorland scarps of stone.

And day by day the whisper of love grows stronger;
 That delicate voice, more urgent with despair,
 Custom and fear constraining her no longer,
 Drives her at last on the waste leagues of air.

A vanishing speck in those inane dominions,
 Single and frail, uncertain of her place,
 Alone in the bright host of her companions,
 Lost in the blue unfriendliness of space.

She feels it close now, the appointed season:
 The invisible thread is broken as she flies;
 Suddenly, without warning, without reason,
 The guiding spark of instinct winks and dies.

Try as she will, the tractless world delivers
 No way, the wilderness of light no sign,
 The immense and complex map of hills and rivers
 Mocks her small wisdom with its vast design.

And darkness rises from the eastern valleys,
 And the winds buffet her with their hungry breath,
 And the great earth, with neither grief nor malice,
 Receives the tiny burden of her death.

A. D. HOPE

David Rowbotham

And Away We Go

He did save my life, I suppose, but that is something I can now overlook . . .

After work, instead of returning to my lodgings, I alighted from the train at a station up the line and sat moping and munching in a small café near by. The omelette was leathery, the toast dry and brittle, the coffee gritty.

A stranger swaggered in and sat opposite me at the table. His nose was crooked, his features were pointed, and his shoulders sloped. His dress was untidy and shabby. Instinctively I grew absorbed in my cigarette and damnable coffee.

He began talking, and, guarded and detached in my replies, I was reaching for my bill when he said something which persuaded me to wait a while.

"You look as if you have more brains than me, brother."

I was immediately interested. I responded with a patronising smile and a more benevolent attitude towards the stranger. Soon I began to make contributions to the conversation. Exchanges became more and more confidential until, sympathising with each other about our common boredom on a cloudy evening, we decided we ought to do something to remedy the situation.

"A dance," suggested William (for so he introduced himself), "and girls." That would be a reasonable sort of beginning. I agreed; I especially approved of the idea of the girls.

The dance, in progress a few stations nearer Wynyard, was one of those public ones to which admittance is gained by dodging among motor-bikes piled up at the kerb outside. We insinuated our way through the checked shirts, craning necks and vivid commentary of the gentlemen congregated at the entrance.

The band consisted of a saxophone, a soloist, a piano, a drum, an accordion and a violin, all perspiring over a rowdy quickstep. A master-of-ceremonies, his hands clasped in front of him at waist-level,

stood in remarkable self-effacement and a dinner-suit on one side of the band platform.

William didn't have the right money, so I paid for his way in.

"Well, brother?" he asked at the end of the dance. We had both sat our partners down in their former positions and met among the crowd of gentry who stood like a bunch of buyers in the middle of the floor.

"The answer's no," I said, with a certain air of inadequacy.

"Don't worry. I'll fix it." He spoke as if we were discussing recalcitrant window-blinds.

The master-of-ceremonies suddenly came out of his self-effacement, walked to the microphone, smiled an indulgent smile, and in a loud squeaking voice announced a foxtrot. "Now grab your partners, gentlemen. Don't be shy. One, two, three and away we go."

The band broke into a commotion like a lorry back-firing and then settled down to an unadventurous but loud rendering of an unrecognisable tune. After the dance I was again forced to report to William that I had been about as successful as a country vicar with a chorus-girl.

William for a moment seemed on the verge of incautiously withdrawing his opinion about my brains. Instead he said, with admirable levity, "Never mind, brother. We can share Alice, the one in the jersey. We'll move on soon."

"As you wish," I replied. I always capitulate to plans that are obviously more succinct than my own.

I was duly introduced to Alice. She was pretty in a factory-girl fashion, mousey of hair and valiantly trying to be a sweater-girl into the bargain. Ushered by William we left the rowdy quicksteps and foxtrots and caught a train to the city.

We disembarked at Town Hall station. William, taking Alice's hand, dragged her a trifle unceremoniously up the escalator, up the stairs, into an atmosphere of neon-signs and city-air dampened by a faint mist.

We arrived at a laneway and entered an environment that was dark and illicitly-private within a stone's-throw of brightly-lit trams grinding, unaware of our sudden underworld, along George Street. William stopped before a high board-wall that rose between the sides of two brick premises. Set in the wall about a foot from the footpath was a door. Behind it voices mingled in talk and laughter which penetrated, like the hidden light, through chinks, and eddied over the top of the wall.

"Wait here," said William, and knocked like a lodge-tyler on the

door. It was opened cautiously and he wriggled in. He was absent about ten minutes.

The door opened again and William climbed cheerily back to us, followed by a girl in a tight skirt that was tighter still when she raised a shapely leg to negotiate the foot-high barrier. William gallantly handed her through, waved breezily to an indistinguishable assembly on the inside and called, "Thanks a lot, fellers."

Someone said, "Okay," and the door closed.

"This is Jean."

"Hullo," we said. Jean answered in a lilting husky voice, "Hi, there."

"Jim's is the place," said William mysteriously, marshalling us. "Any taximan will know the way."

William had the drive, cold initiative, ebullient hide, dauntlessness, and kind of scruples that would have made him a luminary in any profession. The only thing he probably lacked was an applied ambition. He was, in his ubiquitous way, a genius, and when I was able to study Jean more clearly in the light of George Street I realised that he could not only enlist the company of junior reporters and sweater-girls, but was capable of drafting something from much nearer the top of the Christmas tree.

His new acquisition was dressed in a light-blue gabardine suit, and had the kind of wavy figure which, when looked at too long, gives one a sort of erotic vertigo. She had smart black hair and poppy-coloured lips.

William hailed a taxi. Amazingly it stopped and we all piled into the back seat. William put his arm around Jean. With an inward sigh I put my arm around Alice. She was nettled by William's transfer of favours; nevertheless, she rested her hand, with sisterliness, on my knee. Jean arranged William's arm around her neck and shoulders as if it were a comfortable but slightly disordered fox fur.

"Jim's, brother," said William.

"Jim's coming right up," said the driver.

"And away we go," said I. The brilliant wryness in my voice fell flat like the sparkle in spilled champagne.

Unlike the walled-in, surreptitious place of George Street, Jim's was undisguisedly open and hail-fellow-well-met in manner. It was a small old-fashioned run-down house with a pointed roof and a railed veranda, separated from the gravel street by a paling-fence with a wire gate. It was ablaze with lights. In an otherwise gloomy, impoverished-looking neighbourhood of similar run-down houses it was conspicuous.

A man stood on the veranda transacting business like a publican without the amenity of a bar and not the least concerned about the disadvantage. He was huge and brisk and genial. A big white shirt with sleeves rolled-up was strapped against his paunch by broad black braces.

The scene was like the alive, bright focal-point of some blacked-out crazy labyrinth of sluggish lanes and alleys turning and squirming and crossing and recrossing one another under the shadows of numberless dead-faced tenements. There were three or four other cars there when we arrived.

"You Jim?" said William on reaching the veranda.

"Right first time," said the man in the shirt and braces. "How many do you want?"

"Two dozen."

"That'll be six quid, bag and a blessing included."

William glanced significantly at me, and whimsically I delved into my wallet and handed over six brand-new hard-earned crackling notes.

A heavy clinking sugar-bag was passed across to us. The transaction was completed.

I helped William carry the "two dozen" out to the waiting taxi. The driver opened the boot, and we carefully laid the load inside it on top of an old mackintosh coat. "That'll cushion it a bit," said the driver sagely.

"We oughter have some glasses. I'll see Jim again," said William in deliberation.

"I can get some from my girl-friend's place," contributed the driver, divertingly.

"Excellent," replied William, donnishly. "Let's go."

The driver's girl-friend's place was the top flat of a two-storied red-brick building in a Bondi back street. Stone stairs poked out like an ugly grooved tongue from the gaping entrance, and led almost from the footpath straight to the first floor. From the flat issued lights, music and singing; a party was in progress.

As we pulled up the driver punched the taxi's horn. Its sound, as if by remote control, opened a window and brought the head and shoulders of a young woman into view. She peered for a while at the driver's figure emerging from the car, and then called out to the room behind her, "Sue. Oh, Soo-oo. Here's your he-man"; then to the street, "You'd better hurry, George. She's just about to be seduced."

George, grinning in confident disbelief, bounded up the stairs, closely followed by William. Hilarity poured from the room like a

Niagara of high spirits. Some of it seemed actually to pour down the stone stairs when, a while later, William and George returned accompanied by a slender-necked giggling coquette in taffeta, holding glasses, and an impeccably-dressed young man wearing a carnation.

"Meet Sue," said William expansively.

"I wonder who the David Jones floor-walker is?" I murmured to Jean.

"Silly, the seducer." I felt humbled by Jean's *savoir faire*.

Sue and Arnold, the fellow with the carnation, bundled themselves into the front seat. William hung his arm around Jean again, George slammed his door, Alice snuggled flatteringly close to me, and the taxi leapt away as if someone had whisked a starting-barrier upwards from in front of us.

"We'll find a cosy bunker on the golf course," said William with an inflection that elevated the remark to the status of a command.

In accordance with William's taste, the bunker was cosy. The mackintosh was spread out to seat the ladies. The gentlemen crouched on haunches round the sugar-bag. The taxi stood, lights out, a dim shape on the footpath on the other side of the fairway.

Bottles popped and froth flowed and glasses glinted and clinked in George's torchlight, screened discreetly by a handkerchief. George wooed Sue, Alice intimated that any mild indiscretions I might be contemplating would be tolerated, and William engaged Jean in the kind of badinage designed to beguile and to obtain a copyright of undivided attention.

Jean, however, maintained an aloofness, for the benefit ostensibly of Arnold, who clung tenaciously to the superior airs of a floor-walker or a feature-writer or a wine-steward. The pose impressed Jean; she became more lilting of voice and more lofty of eyebrow the further the party progressed.

Arnold delicately and lingeringly placed his hand on Jean's smart and gabardined shoulder. Another man, so opposed, might have endeavoured to better his rival by putting his arm round the lady's waist. But not William. The matter needed elucidation, without debate.

William hit Arnold. He hit him in a detached manner, without venom or rancour, as one would swat a fly that was getting in the way. It was a neat precise blow on the chin. It spreadeagled the recipient in astonishment rather than in pain across the bunker. Bottles and glasses scattered.

"Don't poach," said William in admonitory but amiable tones and sat closer to Jean.

Arnold was dumbfounded. He sat up where he had been knocked down, and with a kind of abstract dismay began rearranging the disordered bottles and glasses.

"So you are a floor-walker," I thought.

Jean was affronted by the vulgarity of the event and not a little piqued that she should have been the cause of it. From that instant she treated William with unveiled disdain. George put his arm protectingly round Sue. William, sensing the permanent nature of Jean's disfavour, closed the party down.

He tugged Arnold to his feet with a courteous inquiry about the condition of his chin, as if he were asking after the wellbeing of someone who had inadvertently stubbed his toe. Then he collected the empty bottles in the sugar-bag and made his way at an uneven keel across the course towards the dim outline of the car. Studiously trying to keep a keel less uneven, we followed.

Once again, the taxi lurched forward along a road made faintly eerie by a slight but indelible mist.

"Town Hall station, brother," ordered William.

"Town Hall coming up," answered George.

The taxi swerved into the Park Street kerb at Bebarfald's and pulled up with a little mechanical squeal. The Town Hall clock showed ten minutes to two. William, Alice, Jean, Arnold and I scrambled out. Good-byes sounded all round. The bunker incident was forgotten. Alice linked her arm in mine, and William, holding his sugar-bag with a proprietary air, said with a less proprietary air to Jean, "Coming along?"

"This is where I got on—brother," replied Jean in the same husky voice, leavened with a superb upper-class animosity. William shrugged and grinned. His crooked nose quivered as if not knowing in which direction to spread itself. It compromised by moving in a rubbery distension almost everywhere.

George, leaning forward from the driving-wheel, remarked, "You owe me a quid."

The remark mangled William's nose into an expression of amazed malignancy. Speechless, he gestured upwards with a vulgar but imperial thumb. The sugar-bag clinked at the motion.

"I'm letting you off light," said George, unperturbed. "The meter's reading thirty bob." He chuckled and Sue joined in. The joke was a huge one.

"Pay the swine," William said to me, "and let's get out of here before I paste him."

I tossed a pound into the taxi. The joke, and the scene, had a

disenchanting potential. I am always prepared to concede a point—or a pound—if resistance is likely to entail too much personal inconvenience. William and Alice and I abruptly left. Arnold and Jean had already departed. They were now merely two shadowy figures shaking off Bebarfald's corner quite peremptorily by walking primly as they could up Park Street towards the lesser ignobility of Elizabeth Street.

The taxi moved off. William spat, with accuracy and discrimination, to the toe of his shoe, grinding his distaste underfoot. The three of us hurried underground, and, rushing on to the platform, were just in time to board a train pulling out. The train stopped as soon as it crossed the bridge, at North Sydney, and showed no inclination to go farther.

It was while we were waiting for another, "through", train that I hit William. My reasons were incontestable. Although William had enlisted Alice in the first place, he had invalidated any claim upon her by his subsequent preoccupation with the more refined and unapproachable Jean.

Alice, abandoned, had found solace in me—an arrangement I thoroughly enjoyed. In view of my initial failure at the dance-hall, I felt at last an unqualified success. I felt, too, some small superiority over William; it seemed a measure of repayment for the money I had outlaid on his behalf.

Consequently, when William tried to take it, and Alice, away from me, I objected. Alice also objected. This emboldened me. William endeavoured to obtain an affectionate but forceful neckhold on Alice, so I spun him round and planted my fist more by luck than judgment on his Adam's apple. He staggered back, and disappeared below the level of the platform. Just as he fell, the platform-light indicated that a train was coming.

Unthinkingly I jumped down after him on to the line to help him back and twisted my foot. Alice shouted, "Why don't you leave him there?" That was ungenerous of Alice.

"I can't. He owes me too much money," I yelled and stood up and fell down again.

William rose to his feet as the lights of the train swung round the bend. Then he did an extraordinary thing. He fell upon me, savagely, like a wild beast about to devour its tormentor in the face of new and terrible hazards closing in. I screamed, Alice screamed and the train sounded its horn. Brakes squealed frantically and William bawled in my ear, "Lie still, you — idiot."

I lost his epithet in tumbling hypothesis. The hypothesis itself was

lost in din and darkness as the train rattled and roared over us. It came to a screeching halt that sounded like all the fiends in hell voraciously swarming around two new arrivals, appetisingly pickled.

Our rigidity, however, and our harrowed souls were not so symptomatic of death and purgatory as the fiends surmised. Disappointed, they vanished.

Their screeches were replaced by shouts, Alice's muffled sobbing voice, running footsteps, a fossicking light and the vibration of undercarriages above our heads. We lay in quiescent anguish in the ditch between the platform-wall and the rails, with the train above us.

William, on top of me, began to swear. He swore with a heat and thoroughness. He was still swearing when we were extricated and placed like two rescued miners on the platform.

The first thing he did was to retrieve his sugar-bag from near the station-fountain. "Threepence a bottle here, brother," he said solemnly. Alice clutched a torn handkerchief and wept on his shoulder.

The touching sight mortified me. Bitterness assailed me like a cruel dyspepsia.

I left them and with my last pound note bought a taxi-ride back to my lodgings. William, with his vacillating Alice, somewhere probably saw the dawn come up on a hazy day.

I never saw William again.

Sidney J. Baker

Language and Character

VISITORS to this country from abroad rarely fail to feel (although they may be too polite to declare in so many words) that, although we are hospitable outdoor types, we live in what is tantamount to a cultural concentration camp. To which, of course, there is no adequate reply. Hence, perhaps, the Australian's enthusiasm for journeying on the face of the earth, especially in the direction of Places Where Things Happen, and his sneaking reverence for collections of old rocks such as Pompeii and the venerable piles that litter the landscapes of England and the Continent.

Whatever else they may be, Australians are certainly great travellers, and this is often their redemption. For the fact is that the Briton and the American rarely fail to recognise an Australian if he chances along, and when he returns to this country (if he ever returns) it is usually with a belief that there must be something recognisable as an Australian character and that, as a corollary, there must be at least the faint hints of an Australian way of life.

We have been assured by some observers at close hand that these things exist. Many writers—among them Thomas Wood, Professor W. K. Hancock, that indefatigable word-spinner A. G. Stephens and his *Bulletin* successors—have found occasion to expatiate on the Australian character and on what they deem to be developing facets of an Australian way of life. But since they have spoken intuitively rather than scientifically, their documentation has been sparse. Not until the 1950's, when Professor O. A. Oeser and his colleagues in the Psychology Department of Melbourne University launched an inquiry into Social Structure and Personality in Australia was a frontal attack made on the accumulation of evidence. This investigation was of great value, but since the fieldwork was confined to Victoria we cannot be sure that the findings apply to Australia as a whole.

There is, however, one branch of inquiry which has reached into the far corners of Australia and been pursued back to our earliest

days. Perhaps in no other field of sociological investigation in Australia has the documentation been more thorough, or, at this stage of our history, anyway, more instructive. Inquiry shows not only that Australians have invented thousands of new words and given new meanings to countless expressions which originated in Britain and America, but that, in the process, they have developed a recognisable pronunciation of their own.

It is justifiable to ask, of course, whether this development reflects the nature of either an Australian character or an Australian way of life. In short, is there any demonstrable link between Australian dialectal developments on the one hand, and an Australian character or way of life on the other? It is a matter on which philologists are more ready to commit themselves than sociologists. The philological view is that, of all the manifestations of human behaviour, nothing reflects more accurately both the individual personality and the collective character of a society than the words used in that society and the way those words are used. The sociological view is that such dialectal habits may serve as a loose sort of guide, but lack of statistical evidence puts the issue on a non-scientific basis. And, of course, this is true, because you cannot factor-analyse a dictionary.

But until such time as a national survey of our social structure and personality is conducted along the lines of that undertaken at Melbourne University we are entitled to see what language can tell us about our collective character and way of life.

Australian English tells us many things. In the first place, it makes it quite evident that our environment is vastly different from that of Britain. As we etch in the details of this environment with words that Australians have either invented or borrowed from abroad and converted to their own use, we become aware that a distinct picture is emerging which has no more than a vague English counterpart: *bush*, *outback*, *backblocks*, *never-never*, *gibber plains*, *gully*, *scrub*, *creek*, *station*, *run*, *billabong*, *bombora*, *channel country*, *Red Heart* and so on. Against this background stand many people pursuing tasks that are as intimately a part of our unique environment as the marsupial. We have found special names for many of these people, either concocting new words to describe them or filching terms from overseas and giving them new applications: *squatter*, *pastoralist*, *jackeroo*, *ringer*, *boundary-rider*, *rouseabout*, *bullocky*, *stockman*, *cow cocky*, *poddy dodger*, *overlander*, *bushwhacker*, *digger*, *fossicker*, *sundowner*, *swagman*, *hatter*, *black tracker* and scores more.

These words are memorials to the fact that environmental influences have forced us as a nation to give special emphasis to certain tasks. If we are inclined to forget how unique these environmental influences are, we have a strong reminder in the vast number of words used to describe our flora and fauna. For example: *dingo*, *kangaroo*, *koala*, *wallaby*, *wallaroo*, *wombat* (animals); *brolga*, *budgerigar*, *currawong*, *galah*, *kookaburra* (birds); *barramundi*, *mulloway*, *nannygai*, *tabbigaw*, *wobbegong* (fish); *boree*, *brigalow*, *coolibah*, *geebung*, *jarrah*, *karri*, *kurrajong*, *mallee*, *mulga* (trees); and words such as *cobra*, a marine worm, *joey*, the young of a kangaroo, *taipan*, a type of snake, and *witchetty grub*.

All these words are taken direct from the Australian aborigines. Our borrowings from the natives go far beyond this. They include *billabong*, *boomerang*, *bunyip*, *cooee*, *corroboree*, *didgeridu*, *dillybag*, *gibber*, *gin*, *humpy*, and *waddy*.

The variety of these words reminds us of an important statement made by the lexicographer Noah Webster in the preface to his *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828). He wrote: "Language is the expression of ideas; and if the people of one country cannot preserve an identity of ideas (with people of another country), they cannot preserve an identity of language. Now, an identity of ideas depends materially upon a sameness of things or objects with which the people of the two countries are conversant. But in no two portions of the earth, remote from each other, can such identity be found. Even physical objects must be different."

The material differences marking Australia as distinct from England are so varied that only the misinformed or the wilfully blind can ignore them. In so far as those differences are reflected in the things we do and the way we do them, we are clearly entitled to feel that we have at least the beginnings of a way of life of our own. Since behaviour patterns are inextricably woven into character, we become aware that this way of life is inevitably contributing to the development of an Australian character.

What are some of the facets credited to this national character of ours? First of all, a to-do is usually made about the accent placed on mateship in Australia, on our egalitarianism, on our tendency to gravitate towards the lowest common denominator in thought and action, on our low tolerance to personal inconvenience in contrast to our extraordinary capacity for collective sacrifice. Then we hear a great deal about the Australian's fanatical absorption in sport, his lowbrowism, his resentment of authority, his willing acceptance of the near-enough and the fair-average. To my mind, all these alleged

aspects of our collective character hold together. They are certainly reflected in our linguistic habits.

To begin with, those linguistic habits are spread with great evenness over the whole of Australia. There is little difference, for instance, between the expressions used and the pronunciation of Western Australia, the eastern states, northern Australia and Tasmania. Minor differences exist, it is true, but for a country of Australia's size they are extremely few. So here is preliminary evidence of an egalitarian levelling. When a person in Albany speaks of *bludging*, *cobber*, *furphy*, *pommy*, *larrikin*, *ratbag*, *ropeable*, *rort*, *sheila*, *wowser*, *zac* and *ziff*, the gold fossicker on Cape York and the cow cocky in the Mallee knows what is meant. And when the Sydneysider mentions *S.P. betting*, *drinking with the flies*, *whingeing*, *swy*, *no-hoper*, *Buckley's chance*, *hard case*, *offsider*, *game as Ned Kelly*, *full as a goog*, *drunk as Chloe*, *whipping the cat*, *putting the acid on*, *dropping one's bundle* and *cracking hardy*, there is probably not a single Australian who does not understand immediately. The most important thing to note about these terms is that they are Australian; they do not belong to the language of either Britain or America.

Since we may find some difficulty in understanding how environmental influences can have shaped the development of these expressions (and many more like them), we are confronted with an interesting problem. For some reason, the Australian seems to have a notable capacity for linguistic invention.

I believe that this flair tells us quite a lot about the Australian character. Not only does it assure us of the Australian's sharp-witted innovation and adaptability, which have been features of his life since the earliest days of settlement in this country, but it betrays his restless discontent with the orthodoxies of the English language. This latter point may well be one of some significance, for it is quite clearly a rebellion against established authority. Innovation is justified (and inevitable) when the environment of one linguistic community differs from that of another, but here we seem to be confronted with novelty for novelty's sake.

This word-making exuberance extends into many remote corners of our speech. Consider, for example, such common expressions as *stockwhip*, *stock route*, *tucker*, *pigroot*, *bushranger*, *duffing*, *southerly buster*, *dinkum*, *brumby*, *bowyangs*, *barracking*, *googly*, *guiver*, *nitkeeper*, *shanghai*, *smoodge*, *bombo*, *slygrog*, *skerrick*, *waltzing matilda*, *Rafferty's rules* and *johnhop*. And such phrases as *to poke borak*, *bald as a bandicoot*, *no good to gundy*, *put the hard*

word on, home on the pig's back, to go hostile, do a perish, rough as bags and send her down, Hughie!

It is important to remember that these expressions are not casual neologisms, used once and then forgotten. Most of them have been long-established as part of the linguistic currency of Australia. Not only do they remind us that, in spite of English and American influences, we have preserved an identity of our own, but they suggest that the spirit of linguistic rebellion runs deep. If we suspect that this rebellion is not altogether unrelated to the Australian's contempt for authority, his resentment of discipline, his lowbrowism, we shall probably not be far astray.

Where some observers (particularly Pure-Well-of-English addicts) go wrong is in mistaking the Australian's readiness to pull a forelock when reproved with an equal willingness to abandon his viewpoint. The Australian has often been accused of possessing a national "inferiority complex". One of the main reasons is because, in his relative isolation at the end of the world, he has lacked standards of reference, and, because of this, he has been none too sure whether he has any right to justify his habits, his opinions, his way of life. Not far beneath the surface of his uncertainty, however, there is an arrogant and unshakeable conviction that what he has is worth keeping. Upon this rock, the surf of critical opinion from without breaks with little effect. And well it might. For our egalitarianism is not merely a defensive levelling; it is a formidable and aggressive unity that refuses to wilt under condemnation. If the dinkydi Australian uses such terms as *plonk, shickered, ridge, grouse, kidstakes, blue, stoush, wog, Aussie, Tassie, possie, fair cow, willy willy, barney, dingo on, wowsersism, digger, good sort, sool on, old identity, hoot, ready up, go crook, do one's block* and *whacko!* he does so with the perfect confidence that, among fellow Australians, anyway, he will be understood. No matter how doggedly attempts may be made to ignore Australianisms out of existence, they continually break through, just as the Australian character continually breaks through. The reason is that both the Australian character and the Australian language are strong enough and vital enough to survive in spite of all the pressures that seek to quench them.

Ken Collie

The Major Learns

IT was unexpectedly hot, that April day in 1952, and I was thoroughly sick of jeeps and broken roads by the time I found the unit I was seeking.

It was tucked away in a quiet valley framed by a horseshoe of those rugged hills so characteristically Korean. The tents and parked vehicles stood along three sides of what had clearly been a paddy field before war had passed this way. Everything looked orderly and I eyed the set-up with approval as I climbed from my jeep and slapped some of the dust from my clothes.

The O.C. was an English major. About thirty-five, I judged. One of the pinkish types with sandy hair, an improbable moustache and a tendency to speak in a kind of strained shout. He beamed a welcome at me.

"I say, I'm frightfully glad to see you," he said, shaking my hand. "Damned hot, isn't it? The colonel called me on the blower from Seoul and said you'd be dropping in. Awfully decent of you actually!"

I said something about my visit being in the line of duty.

"Quite!" he shouted. "But we'll soon deal with that!" Anxiety clouded his face. "You will stay the night, won't you?"

I said I'd like to.

"Oh good show," he cried, "good show! Gets lonely here you know—only officer and all that! Fantastic country, Korea, don't you agree?"

He piloted me through the squad tent which did duty as his orderly-room. Another spacious tent behind it served as his living quarters. It contained two of the usual folding canvas cots with their mosquito-nets looped up out of the way, an improvised table and two chairs, a few assorted boxes, a radio and a kerosene refrigerator.

"Do sit down," he begged.

He went to the refrigerator. "The Ordnance boys don't know I've got this little job," he confided, opening the door and producing a glass jug half-filled with what appeared to be lemon squash.

He placed the jug on the table and added two glasses and a tray of ice cubes. "Awfully sorry to put on such a lean show," he said "but I sent one of my chaps to the NAAFI for some stuff and the clot hasn't returned yet. I'll do you better tonight."

He passed me a drink. It was very cold and there was a slight suggestion of gin to it. I sipped it appreciatively.

"Now," he said, "let's strike a blow for Elizabeth and get that over with, shall we?"

We settled down to talk service business. Files were produced and studied, orders were discussed in detail, our interpretations of some recent supply instructions were nicely synchronised. We sat back, united in cursing the Staff, toasted that and relaxed.

The major refilled my glass.

"How are things generally?" I asked.

"Oh I can't really grumble," he said. "Little things crop up of course and I must admit that some of them get away from me at times. It's this difficult business of integration, y'know—the Great British Commonwealth Thing. I'm all for it of course. All for it. It's a damned fine thing, but one must be . . . well, tactful, at times."

"This is an integrated unit?" I asked. I knew it was.

The major smiled stiffly. "Very," he said. "I've got twelve U.K. types with various regimental backgrounds, two Canadians who will insist on speaking what they claim is French most of the time, all my drivers are New Zealanders, and I've got"—he paused and aged before my eyes—"four Australians." He sighed heavily. "How's that?" he asked plaintively.

"Sounds like a headache," I said. "You find the Aussies troublesome, do you?"

"No no, not really," he said quickly. "It's just that . . . well . . . I find the Canadians hard to understand, the New Zealanders baffle me at times, but the Australians . . ." He left it hanging in mid-air and studied me thoughtfully. I was wearing a Canadian shirt, English trousers and American paratroopers' boots. "You *are* Australian, aren't you?" he asked cautiously, as if expecting me to whip out my boomerang and hit him with it.

I admitted this.

"Good," he said. "You might be able to help me. You see, these fellows of yours I have here—damned good chaps y'know, damned good—these fellows simply bewilder me. Most of the time I just don't know what they're talking about and that's that. They come and go intent on things I know nothing about. All kinds of stuff—strange furniture and gear and so on—appears and disappears all

the time. I've stopped asking about it now, because if I do ask, I get long and complicated explanations out of which I can only conclude that the whole peculiar business is 'fair dinkum' and not really my concern at all. I tell you they can explain something to me and I'll hardly understand a word they use!"

"You'll have to compile yourself a dictionary of their slang," I grinned. "And would it surprise you to know I've met English troops in Korea and Japan who, as far as I'm concerned, might as well speak Esperanto for all the chance I have of understanding them?"

"Yes," said the major, "I know. Grim, isn't it? Getting back to the Australians we were talking about, I must say they're good chaps. Very good. They've done a lot of things to make life here more bearable."

I looked at the refrigerator. "I'll bet they have," I said.

The major followed my glance and coughed.

"I do wish you'd do one thing for me," he begged. "One of the Aussies is a man named Smith. He was concerned in a fight last Monday night. Nothing serious. The canteen had beer that night and you know what soldiers are. But I called Smith in the following morning and asked him about it. Believe it or not, old boy, he gave me what I'm quite sure was a graphic account of the whole affair and left me without a single clue about what happened. I wish you'd talk to him. You'd no doubt understand him and I'd just like to know what happened. There's nothing to it. I'm simply mad with curiosity."

"Certainly," I said. "Call him in and I'll talk to him."

The major raised his voice. "Ferguson!" he roared. "Send Private Smith in here! I want him!"

From the adjoining tent a Scots voice acknowledged the command and could be heard instructing a junior to carry it out.

From where I sat I could watch the canopy of dust over the distant supply route where portion of it snaked into view through a fold in the hills. The road itself, with its constant stream of impatient vehicles, was not visible, but it was there—under the dust. A low-flying helicopter hovered above it and higher, some jets screamed south to Seoul. Even with the rumble of artillery beyond the far line of hills, it all seemed strangely peaceful.

There was a crunch of footsteps and Private Smith appeared.

He was one of those tall, lean ones, with innocent blue eyes set in a sun-tanned face. He threw the major a dazzling salute. "Do you want me, sir?" he asked. His voice was a quiet drawl.

"Ah, yes Smith, I do," said the major briskly. "Stand easy. This is purely informal."

Private Smith relaxed and shot me a shrewd look. I could see that he tabbed me as an Australian and had the impression that he managed to tip me a slow wink without moving a muscle of his face.

The major turned to me. "Take it from there like a good chap, will you?" he pleaded.

I nodded and addressed Private Smith. "It's about last Monday night's row," I said. "I understand you were in it—or know all about it, at least. As the C.O. has just said, this is purely informal. There won't be any charges or any action of any kind arising from anything you might say. Now, what happened?"

"Nothing much," said Private Smith. "It was just wunna the nong Kiwis bunged on a blue."

"I see," I said. "And why did . . ."

"Wait," yelped the major. "That's the kind of thing I mean! Where does the blue bung come in?"

"There was no blue bung," I explained. "To bung on a blue is to start a fight."

"Good Lord," said the major, writing something in his notebook. "And what was this blue about?"

"Dough," said Private Smith.

"I accept 'dough,'" said the major. "Means money, doesn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Now we're really getting somewhere. The nong Kiwi bunged on a blue about dough. By the way, what's a nong?"

"A drongo," said Private Smith. "A kind of dull-witted dill."

"Ah!" said the major. "A drip?"

"Yes sir."

"Splendid! How much money was involved?"

"A caser."

"A *case* of money?"

"A caser," I said. "Five shillings."

The major made another entry in his book.

"You owed the Kiwi five bob?" I asked Private Smith.

He shook his head. "Not really," he said. "It was a bet he didn't have, only he reckoned he did."

"I'm lost again," said the major.

"I'm a bit that way myself, at the moment," I admitted. "I think we'd better start right from the start."

I offered Private Smith a cigarette. He took it, studied the brand with detached insolence and accepted a light.

"Now," I said, "how did it all start?"

"Well," said Private Smith, "it was like this: Lofty, that's the Kiwi I mentioned, has a sister in Sydney and she tracks square with a hoop."

The major shuddered.

"Lofty's sister's fiancé is a jockey," I translated.

"And naturally he gets some good guts and drums her."

"Oh no!" wailed the major. "He gets some good guts and drums her!"

"That means," I said, "that he comes by some sound racing information and informs the girl."

"Correct weight," said Private Smith.

"Well," I said, "go on."

"She writes to Lofty regular," continued Private Smith, "and when she's drummed on a goer she oils him."

"She oils him," repeated the major mechanically. He seemed quite dazed. "For God's sake! She *oils* him!"

"She gives him the information," I said.

"So last Saturday," said Private Smith, "Lofty is full of a good thing his sister has sent him and wants to get set for a caser."

"Ah, the caser!" said the major. "Now I seem to be following the story. Carry on, Smith."

"Yes sir. There used to be a snoozer run S.P. at the bun but he diced it."

"It was too good to last," said the major wearily. "I haven't the slightest idea what that last extraordinary statement was about."

"He said," I explained, "that there was one of the men at battalion conducting a starting price bookmaking business but he gave it up."

"So now," continued Private Smith, "we can only get a bet on with a bloke in Seoul. Well, Saturday morning Lofty asks me if I'm going to Seoul at lunch-time like I always do Saturdays to pick up some stuff and I say I am. So he gives me . . ."

"The caser?" suggested the major.

"Correct weight," said Private Smith. "I always take Knuckles—Private Knowles—with me on Saturdays, but this week I can't because the orderly snake lumbers him for Noggie basher."

"Interpreter!" cried the major.

"Knuck . . . Private Knowles," I said, "had been detailed by the orderly sergeant to take charge of a Korean working party." I looked at Private Smith. "So your mate can't go with you, eh?"

He nodded agreement. "He's crooked on it, too. He comes and sees me and asks me can I watch the job for him for about an

hour while he shoots through to wog some combats with a Gook crow."

"Hold it!" I ordered as a strangled sound came from the major. "To wog is to dispose of to the locals. 'Combats' are American cigarettes. Private Knowles, therefore, had it in mind to sell some American cigarettes to a Korean woman. Right?"

"Right," said Private Smith. "So I take over and he blows through. And he don't come back. I find out later that he bumps some cobbers with grog, gets stuck into the hops and flakes out, but at the time I don't know this. He leaves me for dead and my afternoon's euchred."

"Are you following all this, sir?" I asked the major.

"Near enough," he groaned, "near enough."

"That night," said Private Smith, "I see Lofty and give him back his caser. And is *he* butcher's . . .?"

"Butcher's," I interjected. "An abbreviation for 'butcher's hook' meaning 'crook' meaning, in this case, very annoyed."

"That's right," said Private Smith, "he's good and pisto." He smiled faintly. "'Pisto' is a Japanese word meaning 'butcher's,'" he said slyly.

"The man was angry because you didn't place his bet?" frowned the major.

"Yes sir. The horse won easy and he reckoned he was on it."

"So that was it?" I said. "That started an argument building up into the brawl in the canteen on Monday night?"

"That's about it," said Private Smith. "First he said I'd got the bet on and taken the knock on his dough. Then when he found out for sure I hadn't left the camp area, he said I should've paid the bet anyway because I wouldn't've said anything if the nag had lost. Next thing, I meet him in the trough on Monday night and he's elephant's."

"That," said the major eagerly, "I must know about."

"He was in the trough—the wet canteen; elephant's—elephant's trunk—drunk."

The major wrote in his book. "Elephant's trunk—drunk," he murmured delightedly. "Haw haw! Jolly good!"

"And then what?" I asked.

"Then he bunged on a blue," said Private Smith.

"This is where we came in," said the major.

"Mind you," said Private Smith, "I don't think it woulda come to much if the mug Pongo hadn't bought in."

"Private Smith," I told the major, "thinks the situation was aggravated by the interference of an English soldier."

"That doesn't surprise me," said the major. He grinned at Private Smith. "A nong, I take it?"

Private Smith shook his head. "A bodgie," he corrected.

The major deflated and waved a limp hand. "I don't want to know what that is," he said sulkily.

"There were blows struck, were there?" I asked.

"A couple," said Private Smith. "Nothing much. He tried to hang one on me and missed and I clocked him."

"And it's all over now?"

"Yeah. We're good mates."

"That's the spirit," I said.

"Well," said the major, "it's all been most interesting, I'm sure. Don't let's have any more blues, Smith. That'll be all."

"Yes sir," said Private Smith. He threw the major another salute even more stunning than the first one and left the tent. He returned at once and stood with his head just inside the entrance.

"We still informal?" he inquired.

"Why?" asked the major cautiously.

"Business," said Private Smith. "Either of you jokers interested in some combats—up to twelve cartons of Yank smokes at ten bob a time?"

The major nodded briefly. He fished a wallet from his shirt pocket, took a pound note from it and handed it to Private Smith.

"Two?" asked Private Smith.

"Correct weight," said the major.

A. C. Headley

Something Worth Having

COMING along the street towards the factory she saw Ivy and immediately the pleasant warmth of the morning was gone. For a moment she held the idea of hurrying back home, making some excuse to her mother, and ridding herself of the anxiety that would be with her all day. Against this was the thought of waiting twenty minutes at the end of the street for a tram and of losing time from the factory.

She walked on, trying to recall the details of her departure. With a vague hopefulness she thrust her hands into the pockets of her factory overalls, but they were empty. Along the street by the factory entrance, Ivy had stopped to wait for her.

"Hello, I've," she said, and was aware that she was oddly breathless. Ivy's thickly-painted lips spread themselves flatly against her teeth.
"Did you bring it?"

"I forgot." She felt awkward and ill at ease, and she knew that her face had lost a little of its colour. "I thought about it right up to the last minute, then I came away in a rush."

Ivy's mouth pouted.

"You're a nice one, you are. A person lends you a thing and that's about all you think of it." Her voice was a thin whining complaint. "I promised it to Sheila, too. She's got a typewriter and she's gonna get some copies done."

"I'm sorry," she said. "If you like I'll bring it over to your place tonight."

"S'pose it'll have to do."

They went into the factory together, clocked in, and moved along the alley to their tables. By the time they reached them Ivy's first petulance had evaporated.

"What'd you think of it, Mary? How'd you like it?" There was an avid obscenity in her attitude.

"It was pretty hot," Mary said.

"I bet it's the hottest thing you ever seen."

Behind them a motor whirred, then settled into a steady hum. Belts began to slap and noise filled the room. She turned away from Ivy and threw the conveyor into gear. White cakes of soap began to move along the bench in front of her. She reached out, separated a faulty cake from the others, and dropped it into the bin by her side.

The moment she started, there was time for thinking, and she was back in her room once more, trying to remember the details of her departure. But the only point that came with clarity was the fact that she had left Ivy's letter under the leg of the alarm-clock. She was sure now that there was no possibility that she had removed it, because there had been no reason for the action. All she had intended was to put it in the pocket of her overalls and return it to Ivy.

Now she thought, with a sick feeling in her stomach, of the well-worn, folded sheet of paper conspicuous under the leg of the alarm-clock. Some time during the day her mother would go into the room to follow the routine of her tidying up, and she knew that the letter would have no chance of getting past her mother's curiosity. That was too much to expect. Her face was warm, and she touched fingers against her cheek.

She turned a few cakes of soap on the conveyor and was suddenly trying to comfort herself, thinking of other things she had done automatically, things like the locking of doors that became a worrying apprehension until the proof of the action was established. Immediately this was dulled by the conviction that nothing like this had happened, and the letter was sitting up, waiting for her mother to make the discovery.

She was sorry now that she had ever known about the letter. On Monday she had seen it travelling around among the girls, and, in the canteen, she had heard the giggling comments, watching them become playfully secretive when the boys wanted to know what it was all about. Yesterday afternoon Ivy had brought the letter along to her.

"You'd better see it," Ivy said. "Just about everybody else has."

"What is it?"

"Take a look and find out for yourself."

She had taken it then, and thrust it into the pocket of her overalls. Ivy looked at her doubtfully.

"You can't keep it," she cautioned. "I just give it to you to take a look at."

Afterwards, she realised that she hadn't wanted to give Ivy the satisfaction of seeing her read it.

"Don't worry," she said, "I'll let you have it back as soon as I get a chance to look at it."

Ivy was still uncertain.

"At any rate, don't lose it. It's the only one I've got." She jerked her head across the floor. "Danny Ewens give it to me."

He was watching them, grinning, knowing what it was all about. She turned her head quickly away, aware of the sudden warmth of her face. She had no time for Danny. He was smug, sure of himself, proud of his reputation. A long time ago he had asked her to go to a dance with him, and she had left him in no doubt as to where he stood with her. He had shrugged his shoulders.

"Suit yourself. It's your funeral."

With his eyes on her, the thought of the letter in her pocket was an acute embarrassment. For a moment she had the impulse to hand it back to Ivy, but, with Danny watching, it was an admission of his influence on her.

"I'll give it to you back in the morning, I've."

She read it that night, lying on her bed in the narrow room, with the thought of Danny Ewens in the back of her mind. She was surprised to discover that she found a peculiar excitement about the letter. She was disgusted, but she read it half a dozen times before she turned out the light.

Now she was thinking of it held firmly by the leg of the alarm-clock for her mother to find.

The morning wore away with little stabs of worry. A headache came and stayed with her even after she'd got some aspirins from the forewoman. When she went to the canteen for lunch, Danny Ewens dropped into the seat across from her. He looked at her across the table and grinned, and immediately she had the absurd feeling that she was sharing a dirty joke with him. He was cool and sure of himself.

"There's a good hop on tonight," he said.

"I hope you enjoy yourself," she said coldly.

Somehow the afternoon was gone at last. In the tram she tried to comfort herself with the thought that the worry was unnecessary, that her mother had not discovered the letter, or, if she had, had not been interested enough to open out the soiled folds and read it. The possibility existed, too, that she could have slipped it into a drawer for safekeeping.

The moment of stepping in through the front door was an evaporation of hope. Her mother's mouth was a tight bulge over her teeth.

"Your father wants to see you, my lady. He's got something to say to you."

"Why . . . what's the matter?"

She was abruptly aware of the dryness of her mouth. At the same time, with a shocked incredulity, she realised that her mother was enjoying the moment. There was a peculiar satisfaction in her mother's manner.

"You'll find out soon enough what's the matter when your father gets home," her mother said.

"Where is he?" she asked flatly.

"Your father's gone up the street. You better go up to your room till he comes." She gave a loud sniff. "I don't want you helpin' me. I'll lay the table meself."

The letter was gone. The instant the door had opened, her eyes had flicked to the alarm-clock standing on the chest-of-drawers. Nevertheless, she opened the drawers and looked through them quickly.

Now there was nothing to do but wait for her father. She walked across to the window and looked down into the thin backyard. Kids were playing in the lane and the sound of their voices made her feel remote and lonely. She took off her overalls and dropped down on to the bed. She lay back and her eyes fixed themselves on the brown spot on the ceiling where the rain had come through. She was surprised to discover that she had ceased thinking about the letter. She closed her eyes, and, because she had discovered that she was no longer thinking of it, the thought of the letter was back in her mind. Suddenly, she was remembering the words and phrases and seeing her father reading through it. She heard the clock downstairs strike six.

At half-past six she heard the sound of the front door. Thick-soled boots clattered along the hallway, and then her mother's thin voice was telling him that she was home.

He came into the room without knocking and his hand reached out to flick the switch and flood the room with light. He stood there a moment looking at her, without speaking, and she knew that he had been drinking.

His eyes were flat and without life. He was a big man, but flesh had grown around his face without touching the sharpness of his features. A small mouth, stretching a thin string of spittle, hung open against the folds of pink flesh. He cleared his throat.

"I got something to say to you, young lady."

She waited for him without speaking, and he looked at her uncertainly. He cleared his throat again.

"You been brought up in a good 'ome. Your mother an' me have slaved to give you a good schoolin', and what thanks do we get?"

She was aware suddenly that, like her mother, he, too, was finding satisfaction in the situation. Immediately she was incredibly bored.

"For heaven's sake," she said, "what's got into everybody?"

The moment she uttered the words she realised it was the spark he needed to stir him to the anger he had been trying to force into himself. Anger was necessary to him. Without it, there were words to struggle with, attitudes to be posed. Her father's thin lips chewed against each other.

"Don't you talk to me like that, you dirty little faggot." His hand came out of his coat-pocket holding the letter. "I don't s'pose you know anything about this." He sucked in a deep breath. "You come 'ome here bringing your filth." He waved the letter. "A fine thing this is for your mother to find. No wonder she's been upset all day."

The first terror was moving away from her. The thing had been aired and was no longer frightening.

She said quietly, "One of the girls in the factory gave it to me. I didn't know what was in it till I brought it home."

"That's right," he snorted, "make it worse with your bloody lies. How many more of these bloody things have you got hidden away? Gawd knows what else you been up to."

She was suddenly angry.

"I told you the truth. You can take it or leave it."

"You keep a civil tongue in your head," her father ordered gruffly. "What you want is a good taste of the strap."

It was an idea that pleased him. He thrust the letter into his pocket and started to fumble with the buckle of his belt. She moved on the bed.

"Don't you dare lay a hand on me," she said fiercely.

But she could tell that the strap had suddenly become his solution to a problem that had been beyond him. She watched wide-eyed while he slipped the belt from his waist and looped it in his hand. He tried a slap against the palm of his free hand.

"This is just what you need," he said. "This'll belt some of the nonsense out of you."

She said, "Don't you touch me."

He was coming across the room towards her. She leapt up from the bed and moved away from him, but in the narrowness of the room there was no escape for her. The bulk of his body crowded her into a corner and his thick fingers closed hard on her arm. She tried to break away, but he twisted her and caught her in to his side. With all of her strength she tried to twist, but the grip was fierce and firm. The bite of the belt came sharp against the bare flesh of her legs.

She twisted back her arm and her nails caught in the skin of his

face. He swore, and the strap flailed fiercely against her body. Above the sound of exertion, her mother's voice eddied up from the foot of the stairs. The lash of the strap against her body ceased. Her father dropped her on to the bed, and she could hear the heavy sound of his breathing as he walked across the room and closed the door behind him. She climbed off the bed and flicked the room into darkness.

At half-past seven she heard the sound of the front door and knew that her father had gone off to his Wednesday night at the billiard-saloon. She waited a few minutes, staring into the darkness, then she switched on the light. She dressed quickly, touched lipstick to her lips and went down the stairs.

Her mother was in the lounge-room, darning and listening to the radio. She walked along the hallway, and her mother's thin voice came rushing after her.

"Your tea's in the oven."

She opened the door and went out into the street.

Danny Ewens was where she had expected she would find him.

From the street outside the milk-bar, she watched him put a coin into the juke-box. For a moment she hesitated, then she went in and ordered a milkshake. Danny came across to where she was standing.

"Fancy striking you," he said. He was wearing a blue suit and his hair was straight and shiny with oil.

"I don't often come in here," she said.

He looked at her.

"Listen," he said, "how'd you like to come to a dance with me?"

"I was going to call in at one of the girl's places."

"You can do that any night."

"I don't go dancing much," she said. "I'm not very good."

"Doesn't matter. I'll show you."

At ten o'clock they came out of the dance-hall.

"I'll see you home," Danny said.

They walked in silence past the darkened shops.

"We'll take the short-cut through the park," Danny said.

They turned down a side street and came into the park. Instantly she was aware that their pace had slowed.

Danny said, "Look, you don't have to be home this early."

"How would you know?" It was the kind of retort Ivy would have made and she felt a touch of warmth on her cheeks.

"Look," Danny said, "let's sit down for a while. There's a seat over there."

She walked with him into the park, feeling the sponginess of

grass under her feet, and they sat on the seat and talked about the factory. Then his arm had slid off the seat and was around her. He caught her chin with his free hand and turned her face towards him. For a moment she was conscious of a vague feeling of panic. Her body stiffened, then as quickly relaxed.

Her father was coming across the room towards her, his thin lips working one against the other. She leapt up from the bed and moved away from him, but in the narrowness of the room there was no escape for her. The bulk of his body crowded her into a corner and his thick fingers closed hard on her arm. She tried to break away but he twisted her and caught her in to his side. With all of her strength she tried to twist, but the grip was fierce and firm. The bite of the strap came sharp against the bare flesh of her legs.

She kissed Danny hard, and felt his fingers slip around the neck of her frock.

"Look," he said, "it's a lot more comfortable on the grass."

The evening in the billiard-room had done much to restore Linegar's good humour. The letter had been a success. He snapped his cue back into the rack and walked across to where Col Hames was reading it under the light from one of the tables. He waited for Col to finish, then held out his hand.

"Not bad, eh, Col?"

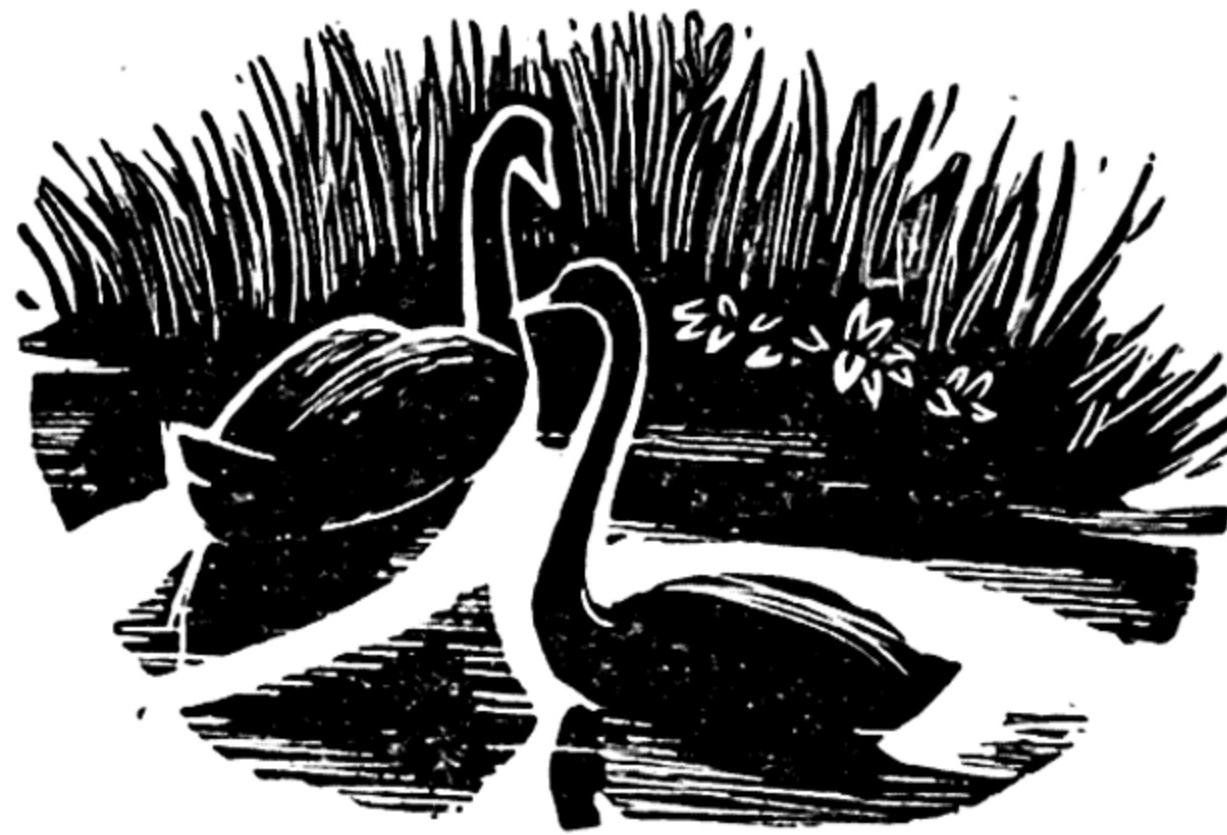
"It's a beauty," Col said. "I wouldn't mind having a copy."

Linegar grinned.

"I got orders for a dozen already. Everybody wants one. Looks like I'll be spending all me beer-money for carbon paper." He shrugged his wide shoulders. "Still, I'll see you get a copy."

"It's something worth having," Col said.

"Yes," he agreed, "it's something worth having."



Brindabella

Once on a silver and green day, rich to remember,
When thick over sky and gully rolled winter's grey wave
And one lost magpie was straying on Brindabella
I heard the mountain talking in a tall green cave
Between the pillars of the trees and the moss below:
It made no sound but talked to itself in snow.

All the white words were falling through the timber
Down from the old grey thought to the flesh of rock
And some were of silence and patience, and spring after winter,
Tidings for leaves to catch and roots to soak,
And most were of being the earth and floating in space
Alone with its weather through all the time there is.

Then it was, struck with wonder at this soliloquy,
The magpie lifting his beak by the frozen fern
Sent out one ray of a carol, softened and silvery,
Strange through the trees as sunlight's pale return,
Then cocked his black head and listened, hunched from the cold.
Watching that white whisper fill his green world.

DOUGLAS STEWART

The Snow Gum

It is the snow-gum silently,
In noon's blue and the silvery
Flowering of light on snow,
Performing its slow miracle
Where upon drift and icicle
Perfect lies its shadow.

Leaf upon leaf's fidelity,
The creamy trunk's solidity,
The full-grown curve of the crown,
It is the tree's perfection
Now shown in clear reflection
Like flakes of soft grey stone.

Out of the granite's eternity,
Out of the winter's long enmity,
Something is done on the snow;
And the silver light like ecstasy
Flows where the green tree perfectly
Curves to its perfect shadow.

DOUGLAS STEWART

Christmas Bells

See them, the wild children
Running in their straight frocks
Of boldest orange and vermillion
All day in the sandstone rocks;

Where, sliding his crimson scales,
The black snake rustles and flows
Down the dry waterfalls
And smoky the blue wind blows,

Heady and hot from the hollow,
Telling what robe of fear
Scarlet and flaring yellow
The summer forest will wear.

"My children will never behave,
 They have the sun's hot flesh,"
 Cries the old mother in her cave;
 "There on their long bare legs.

"In the sun, in the smoke, in the threat,
 Out from the cool stone shelves,
 They dance all day in the heat
 Like little bushfires themselves."

DOUGLAS STEWART

Ruins

Two golden butterflies mating over the ruins
 Of the iron house that is nowhere's dark dead centre
 Stark on the rise in the huge hot circle of the plains
 All doors and windows gaping for the wind to enter—
 Lord, Lord they think that nowhere is all the world
 And, so they can dance their golden dance of love,
 One hot blue day in the desert more than enough.

And in that same dark house when her husband perished
 The woman, they say, lived on so long alone
 With what she could think and the household things she
 cherished,
 Staring at that vast island of purple stone
 Without one break until the mirage unfurled
 Its ocean of steel, it tore a great gap in her mind
 Harsh as the loose sheet of iron that bangs in the wind.

DOUGLAS STEWART

Nor'-easter

The straw broom of the nor'-easter sweeps the beach.
Yellow, raking straws of sand, stinging, cleansing, scratch
My raw legs; but no woman can I see
My head hung low, while she is ranting at me.
Not my day; not a day for dogs, or gulls,
Or canvas flapping. Cleaning the beach, squalls
Threatening, cumulus cumbersome in the hills
Of the sea-littoral; this wind kills
All joy of the beach, is a steamroller wife
Of a man by the sea. All my life
I have been suddenly subdued when she blows.
Only some little good in all her bluster shows:
She cleans the beach, sweeps, beats the sand.
For the white strand of her morning, I once took her hand.

JOHN BLIGHT

Dinghies

Dinghies, those disreputable carts of the sea,
Driverless, and horseless, idle on the mud;
Out-of-date, yet still suffered; tied up
—As if they'd bolt—with chains to the jetty.
Touch one, and watch the red furious blood
Rising in some Lilliput admiral. Top
Of the tide, and they're jostling like wild
Sea-chariots. Never was a tribe of midgets, but
They were like these little, pugnacious,
Racial upstarts; these sea-carts that a child
Can overload and lord it over. Put
One in the tide-race, where its spacious
Flat veranda-bottom entices kicks
And the sea will kick; show how a cart rocks.

JOHN BLIGHT

Sea-Wasp

I know the animals with heads and eyes
—Even pinpointed in insects—and hold some hope
They will know me, see me: but the sea's
Creatures not always animate in a shape
Even of familiar ferocity, hunt
In the shapeless guise of spirits, ghosts,
The conventional ghosts: no back, no front;
Head, if any, under a sheet-shape; hosts
Of a spirit-world. Isn't the sea eerie? Who . . .
What . . . but that dreadful sea-wasp loitering in the tide,
Deadly tropical jellyfish with the whips few
Suspect in his glass-clear skirts, can ride
More ghost-like down the current, shock
A swimmer to death, yet ineffectual look?

JOHN BLIGHT

The Blanket

I found that blanket branded "Alice Springs",
and made my bed with it in stones and sand
where like a lyre the casuarina sings
across a region like a shrivelled hand.

And I, too, lost it in some place, for then
possessions wearied me, and it seemed best
to travel light and clean as other men
who tramped towards a campfire in the west;

who came and made their fires beside those scant
waterholes where thin acacias dream
and painted-finches drink, or the hesitant
red-gold-ringleted lorikeets swoop and scream.

ROLAND E. ROBINSON

The Dancers

I reached that waterhole, its mud designed
by tracks of egret, finch and jabiroo,
while in the coming night the moon declined:
a feather floating from a cockatoo.

Ten paces more and there, in painted mime,
against the mountain like a stone-axe dropped,
the spirit-trees stood stricken from the time
the song-sticks, song-man and the drone-pipe stopped.

Some thrust their arms and hands out in the air,
and some were struck, contorted, on their knees;
and deep and still the leaves like unbound hair
lay over limbs and torsos of those trees.

Over their limbs their night-still tresses slept;
faint in the stars a wandering night-bird creaked.
Then, as towards their company I stepped,
the whole misshapen tribe awoke and shrieked.

And, beating from their limbs and leaves, white birds,
like spirits in a terror of strange birth,
streamed out with harsh and inarticulate words
above the plains, mountains and trees of earth.

ROLAND E. ROBINSON

Altjeringa

Nude, smooth, and giant-huge,
the torsos of the gums
hold up the vast dark cave
as the great moon comes;

shock-headed black-boy stands
with rigid, thrusting spear,
defiant and grotesque
against that glistening sphere;

in clenched, contorted birth
black banksias agonise;
out of the ferns and earth,
half-formed, beast-boulders rise;

because The Bush goes back,
back to a time unknown:
chaos that had not word,
nor image carved on stone.

ROLAND E. ROBINSON

Ray Maley

Growing Up

THE little boy sat quietly in the corner of the old box-like carriage as the train tugged slowly and urgently at its rumbling retinue. Outside the pattern of green fields stretched a mile or two until they merged almost imperceptibly into the grey-black folds of the foot-hills. Beyond, the coastal mountain range was the backdrop which closed out the rest of the world. But for the most part his eyes now were glued to the telegraph lines which swung between the posts at short intervals within the railway lines' own domain measured off by the grey wooden three-bar fence.

He followed the wires up and down with his eyes. Down now from a post to the bottom of their gentle arc then as gently up again to the fleeting jolt from his vision as once again they grabbed at the insulators and as quickly let go. It was rather like being on a seesaw, he thought, or perhaps riding on the "scenic railway" that his father had told him about.

The thought of his father jerked his attention unwillingly to the big man opposite in the other corner seat against the window, riding with his back to the engine so that the boy "would not get train sick". As if he would get sick. As if he would be sick like the little sister who sat on his mother's lap beside him.

Ordinarily he would have been enjoying the trip home as much as the trip down. Then he had had the fun of pointing out things that no one else in the family had seen—the odd black sheep (it was really brown) in the flock of lovely woolly creatures; the horses, racehorses for sure, at the lovely farm standing out in memory as clearly now as when he had seen it, white walls and verandas covered with the creeper with the purple flowers all hanging downwards. Then, the holiday had just been starting; now it was rushing to its end and every turn of the wheels beneath him meant going back to school and a year to wait until the family came away again.

The boy's reverie was interrupted by the voice of his father.

"Johnny, would you like a drink of something at the next station?"
"No, Dad."

"No what?" his mother's voice interposed gently at his side.

"No thanks, Dad," he muttered automatically and settled down once again to watching the telegraph lines and listening to the clattering rhythm of the constant argument between wheels and lines.

The parents exchanged a glance, unseen by the boy, and the father raised his eyebrows and gave a gently expressive shrug. What was there to do about it? For days the boy had been drawn into his shell. Polite, politely interested, but the childish enthusiasm had gone and nothing in his behaviour to show why. His father looked down at him tenderly and said no more.

The boy's attitude had changed somewhere during the week just past, but no amount of cajoling had won any indication from him where it had begun.

It was perhaps best to leave things as they were. No good to take him by the hand and try to have a heart-to-heart talk. That had been all right in the past but now Johnny was going on for ten and it was time to make a man of him. Too much of that sort of pampering wasn't going to do any good and for that matter he got all he needed, perhaps too much, of that sort of thing from the quiet woman beside him.

He wanted to protect the boy but he wanted him to grow up tough too; tough enough to stand up to things for himself. The outdoor life was what he needed, football and things like that to balance the petting that his mother could not help giving him.

The big man idly picked up the magazine beside him and flicked its pages through to see what he would read, felt in his pockets absently for the cigarettes and matches, lit up, and relaxed.

The boy's eyes flickered from the view outside on to his father, turned slowly to take in the rest of the compartment. The family of four had it to themselves. Thus, in the two luggage racks overhead there was plenty of room for the suit-cases and the hat-boxes, the cane carrying-bag in which the mother had packed the lunch of sandwiches and fruit and the thermos flask of tea that, in some magic way, stayed hot for hours and hours. Below the luggage racks on either side of the carriage was a square mirror and frosted into the surfaces were the letters N.S.W.G.R. He had worked out the New South Wales part and guessed that the fifth letter stood for "railway"; but the G was strange. And he wasn't going to ask anyone about it anyway. Flanking the mirrors were big photographs—one with a scene very much like what was passing outside the train but the other

was of a sweep of mountains, snow covered and vast and the description underneath "Snow scene in the Australian Alps". He craned his neck to look at the two pictures above his head on the wall on his side of the carriage. Here were some sad-looking cows and in the second a view of the coastline with beaches stretching into the distance and in the foreground a fisherman, rod in hand, casting out into the waves breaking over the rocks on which he stood.

The picture of the fisherman brought it back. The holiday had been wonderful up to then and the boy began to live again through the two beautiful weeks of midsummer glow that had just passed.

Every year for as long as he could remember summer had meant the holiday and the two weeks with his father. There were his mother and sister, of course, but they really didn't come into the picture except as vague and comfortable company. There to look after clothes and things, but the holiday was really his and his father's. Each year it had been the same boarding-house where the people knew them and welcomed them every year. "So you're back again. Well, now, let's see if we can make you comfortable. You must be tired after the journey." But he had never been tired after the journey; and with a quick change from his good clothes there was everything to explore all over again.

The fishing village teetered on the edge of the river. Some of the older houses were built right up to the water and the people could almost step out of their front doors into their small rowing boats. The boarding-house, two stories high with verandas running around two sides of it, sat back sedately behind its sweep of buffalo lawn. A path led down to its own jetty and the boats including the big launch that the men used for their fishing trips. How many times had he watched enviously as it chugged its way from this point where the sluggish tidal river joined the bay to its favoured spots far out on the grey-blue sea.

Down near the mouth of the river the shipbuilders were working this year, as last, on a wooden trawler—only this time the ship they were building was nearer being finished than last year when only a keel and the ribs, like an unfinished and upended birdcage, were there to clamber over after the men had finished their work and gone home for the day. This year the ship was nearly ready for the sea.

He could see the men at work from where he stood on the upper veranda. As soon as he could he would be down there to watch them, swinging the adzes with a lazy skill, trimming the planks to make a deck on which he could strut in a game of captains and sailors when no one was around.

There was fishing too, off the jetty for the little yellowtails. They would please his father because they were good bait for catching the surface fish, the mackerels and kingfish, with a stout cord line slung over the stern of the launch as the men made out for the snapper grounds near the heads of the wide enclosed bay.

Dad had promised him this year that if the other men didn't mind he would take him on one of these trips. Boy, wouldn't that be something to tell the other kids back home?

He was immensely content as he looked around him. He had seen other children down near the jetty as he and the family had arrived and it wouldn't take long to make friends with them. It was the same every Christmas holidays and just like going to school for the first time. They would be distant at first, jealous of the friendships already made and not keen to accept a newcomer into their secret councils. But after a day or so he would be a member of the tribe and equally suspicious of the children who would turn up later. You suffered for a while. But soon, in the way of children, it was your turn to be lofty and condescending and even a bit cruel to the stranger.

The fishing trip came in the second week. He had plagued his father daily as he saw him get his lines ready for the frequent trips that the men made. He had been there to see them go and had watched the launch out of sight as it dipped and rose on the gentle swell that swept across the bay from the distant entrance; he had been there at the jetty to welcome them back, to admire the snapper and the pike and the teraglin, the red bream and the squire, the morwong and the brilliant parrot fish. He knew them all and the ritual was always the same.

"Which ones did you catch, Dad?" and if Dad had caught the biggest the day was all the better for it.

On the rough days the men would look like real fishermen as they wrapped themselves in their rainproof coats and put their ancient hats on. "Were you sick, Dad?" and if Dad hadn't been sick it only confirmed what he already knew—that Dad was the best fisherman of the lot. The ultimate triumph was if everyone else had been sick and Dad hadn't, and Dad had caught the best fish. Then he was the boasting king of the small fishermen of the jetty.

The day had been rough, and Dad hadn't been sick and the fishing in spite of the weather had been good.

"When *can* I come with you, Dad?" he had asked that night and Dad had promised to see about it.

He was ready for bed when the answer had come that he could go, and try as he might it was hours before he could sleep.

Morning had found him up and ready long before dawn, long before anyone else. There was the interminable impatient waiting, the excitement of a cup of scalding tea and cold sandwiches in the kitchen, taken almost stealthily for fear of waking up the sleepers, the thrill of moving down the river and over the bar in the pre-dawn half-light and the ecstasy of being allowed to stand on the cabin on the launch, holding on to the stubby, swaying mast, legs spread like a sailor as he had seen the men do even though the sea was swelling and falling as gently as someone breathing in sleep.

The sun had risen out of the sea before the man at the tiller decided that the grounds had been reached, but long since all the lines had been readied and he had taken up his position beside his father near the stern of the boat and out of the way of the other men.

The breeze which had been gentle when they set out had risen slightly, but he was too intent at first watching his line in the water to notice the queasiness that the long slow swell was bringing with it. His head ached a little and moisture cloyed the back of his tongue. He stole a glance at his father nonchalantly rolling a cigarette, the gut line poised carefully over his right forefinger, plaster wrapped to stop the singing line cutting to the bone when the big ones came on.

"They're biting," said someone up at the front of the boat and a moment later: "Got him" and the line began to come in hand over hand.

His neighbour seized the landing net and while the lucky one kept the line taut leaned far over the side, eased the big net under and around the fish and brought it kicking elliptically into the well of the launch.

More fish came in, but the aching head was getting worse and the boy lost interest as he fought to stop himself being sick.

His father was watching him so he mustn't let him know. To be sick on his first trip . . . it mustn't happen. His line stayed slack. There were no fish for him and he was glad, for now he felt he could not have pulled even a yellowtail up into the boat.

He was sick. There was no doubt of it. He would have to lie down somewhere, anywhere. And then there it was. He vomited over the side and his father looked down at him.

Sickness killed shame and there were tears in his eyes as he looked at his father.

What would Dad say? And what would the other men say? But

they were too busy to take any notice as his father grabbed the old straw broom from the deck, dipped it in the water and scrubbed away where he had been sick on the side of the boat.

The boy's father looked long at him sitting quietly in the corner near the stern.

What will I say to him? Sympathy? In front of the men? But I have to make a man of him. His mother would hold him in her arms and nurse him; but that's no good. He has to learn to be tough, to take it and come up smiling.

"What's the matter, son?" He wanted to sympathise, to tell him to take it easily and perhaps the sickness would go away, to put some cool water on his forehead, but that would be mollycoddling. No, not that. Treat him toughly and he'll toughen up. That was it.

The problem solved, the father looked down into the face of the sick little boy and laughed.

The laughter broke the silence surrounding the absorbed men whose ears had grown used to and eliminated from consciousness the other morning sounds, the slap of the water against the boat, the screech of the scavenging sea-birds.

They looked around and saw the boy in his corner and the man standing above him looking down, the harsh laugh dying away. Some of them laughed too and turned back to their lines.

"He's sick," the father said. "Couldn't take the little bit of a rock we've got this morning."

He turned away and the boy turned his face into the corner. His father had laughed—laughed at him when he was sick.

In the corner of the carriage he looked once again across at the man opposite him half hidden behind his magazine. They couldn't be friends any more and the holidays wouldn't be the same. Dad had made a man of him.

R. S. Porteous

A Deal with Father

CAPTAIN Wellshot stepped from the taxi and grudgingly paid the driver.

If he hadn't watched every penny all his life he wouldn't be the owner of the fine ship lying alongside now. What if she *was* only a small coastal cargo ship grossing a mere 2,053 tons? She was rated A1 at Lloyd's, she would be sailing within the hour with a full cargo, and she was all his. He owned and commanded her.

He'd counted his change, and was about to pick up his suit-case when he caught sight of a slim, hatless girl leaving the wharf. What the devil was his daughter doing down here?

"Hey!" he bellowed, the obvious answer dawning on him. "Sally!"

She turned, waved gaily, blew him a kiss and vanished through the wharf gates.

Except where money was concerned Captain Wellshot was not a hard master. He lived on easy terms with his officers and encouraged conversation at the saloon table. He had even gone to the extent of inviting young Carew, his second mate, home to dinner when they were in Sydney several voyages back.

And what thanks had he got for his kindness? The outcome had been an affair between his daughter and a jumped-up young second mate who probably spent every penny of his salary as soon as he drew it.

"When we're in this port you can find some other way to fill in your spare time," he'd informed Bill Carew. "But keep away from my house. That's an order. I've got nothing against you personally, but I don't intend to let my daughter get herself involved in an affair with a seaman. Any seaman. Is that clear?"

And being an ambitious young officer Bill Carew simply said, "Aye, aye, sir."

Captain Wellshot felt reasonably certain now that he had been defied. Why else had Sally come down to the ship just before sailing-time? Certainly not to say good-bye to him; she'd already done that

at home. Yet without making himself look ridiculous he couldn't ask his second mate what his daughter was doing on the wharf.

Standing on the wharf, glaring at his second mate so unconcernedly superintending the singling-up of the stern lines, Captain Wellshot failed to notice what would have been apparent to a casual observer. There was a definite resemblance between himself and young Carew. Both were short, broad-shouldered men and, though age had thickened Captain Wellshot's waistline and let the once-square shoulders droop a little, in his youth he must have been very like this agile, slim-hipped young man. But more noticeable still was the similarity of the lower jaws—determined, out-thrust jaws that made one wonder what the outcome would be if these two ever crossed swords.

"I'll make you sit up and take notice, young man," Captain Wellshot muttered as he walked aboard. "Before this voyage is over you won't want to come within a cable's length of any member of the Wellshot family."

During the next three weeks it was obvious to the *Torakina's* crew that the Old Man had it in for the second mate. The only man who appeared to notice nothing unusual in the captain's attitude was the second himself. As Mr. Jones, the first mate, remarked, Bill Carew was proving a tiger for punishment.

"Why is he making such a set at you this voyage?" he asked Bill Carew as he handed over the watch one wet, blustering evening. "He don't ever let up."

Bill shrugged his broad shoulders and said airily, "Maybe he doesn't like the cut of my jib."

"Blowed if I can see what he could have against it." Pelican Jones was not noted for his sense of humour. "Why, it's the dead-spit of his own. I thought you must be some relation of his when you first come aboard."

"You must have second sight," Bill said, and laughed at the puzzled expression on his senior's face.

The mate caressed his huge nose thoughtfully and moved away.

"Thank the Lord I'm not mixed up in it," he muttered.

It was his watch below, and he didn't intend to spend one extra minute on the cheerless rain-swept bridge. Securely wedged in his bunk he could forget the wet blackness of the night and let the officer of the watch worry about the discomfort and lack of visibility. He wouldn't be disturbed again until four o'clock next morning, and by that time the weather might have cleared.

Jones was wrong on both points. At eleven-thirty the wireless

operator came up to the bridge with a message. "A nasty sort of a mix-up," he informed the second, handing him the slip of paper. "Not far off by the sound of his wireless."

Bill Carew stepped into the chart-room and switched on the shaded light above the chart-table. Tensely worded, the message stated that the Dutch ship *Klumpang* had been in collision with the *Lotus Creek* of Sydney. The *Lotus Creek* was sinking by the head, and though the *Klumpang* was standing by to take off her people she was uncertain of the extent of her own damage. The message ended with the position of the two ships and a request for any vessel in the vicinity to stand by.

Picking up dividers and pencil Bill made a few rapid calculations. "Tell him we expect to be there by daybreak," he told Sparks. "Say about 5 a.m." He gave the helmsman a new course and blew down the voice-pipe to the captain's cabin.

Arriving on the bridge with an oilskin pulled on over his pyjamas Captain Wellshot listened impatiently to his second mate's report. "Who gave you permission to send messages and alter course?" he snapped.

"I thought it was the correct and seamanlike thing to do, sir."

"I do the thinking aboard this ship," Captain Wellshot told him. "The correct thing for a junior officer to do is to send for the master at once. And when I want your advice on what is or isn't seamanlike I'll ask for it." He lumbered into the chart-room, checked his second mate's calculations and then, unable to find fault with them, called the engine-room and asked for all the speed they could give him. "Rouse Mr. Jones," he ordered. "Tell him to have a boat made ready for lowering. He can call for volunteers to man her."

"Aye, aye, sir. Who will be going in charge of the boat?" The second was undoubtedly proving a tiger for punishment. He must have known the question would give his captain one more chance to snub him.

It did. Captain Wellshot said coldly, "If I decide it's necessary to send a boat away, Mr. Carew, I'll detail the officer who can best be spared, to take charge of her."

An hour before dawn the *Klumpang* wirelessed that she had taken off all the *Lotus Creek's* people and was proceeding direct to Sydney. She was not in need of assistance. The abandoned *Lotus Creek* was settling by the head and would probably sink before dawn.

The *Torakina* acknowledged the message but held her course. "We've come this far out of our way," Captain Wellshot told Jones, "we might as well see the last of her, if she's still afloat."

In the first grey streaks of dawn they sighted her—a pitiful crippled thing, so far down by the head that the bigger seas broke clean over her foredeck. Captain Wellshot knew her well. Only a few hours ago she had been a fast modern cargo ship of 10,000 tons, the latest addition to the Creek line. Now, from a seaman's point of view, she was nothing but a menace to navigation until she took the final plunge.

But *was* she? Captain Wellshot scanned her carefully, constantly checking the angle from her depressed bow to her high-cocked stern. He reduced the *Torakina* to half speed and slowly circled the stricken ship. Since she'd stayed afloat so long there was just a possibility . . .

"She doesn't seem to be getting any lower in the water, sir," Bill Carew volunteered, voicing his captain's thoughts.

Captain Wellshot ignored him, and old Pelican Jones shook his head sadly. The second, it seemed, would never learn to keep his mouth shut.

"Mr. Carew." Captain Wellshot spoke at last, tossing the name over his shoulder and keeping his eyes fixed on the *Lotus Creek*. "Do you think you are capable of boarding that ship without endangering the lives of a boat's crew?"

Taken by surprise, Bill said, "Certainly, sir. There isn't a really heavy sea running."

"I didn't ask for your opinion on the sea," Captain Wellshot snapped. "I'm capable of judging that for myself. The point I'm making is that I don't want a boatload of men dragged down if that ship takes a sudden plunge to the bottom. Get aboard her and tell them to lie off till you're ready to come back. Make a thorough inspection and find out what shape she's in. The bosun can take charge of the boat while you're aboard, but tell him to keep well clear. I'll drop you to windward of her and then pick you up in her lee—if she lasts that long."

Mr. Jones watched the manoeuvre in silence. It would be wet and infernally uncomfortable in that boat, he knew, but not dangerous for skilled seamen. Even boarding the derelict would be comparatively easy for an active young man if he watched his chance and boarded her for'ard of the bridge, where she was low in the water.

But what then? To examine that ship thoroughly the second would have to go below. He'd be groping around in semi-darkness in the bowels of a strange ship that might at any minute plunge to the bottom. And if that happened he wouldn't stand a chance. Never had old Pelican Jones felt so nervous, so undecided.

He watched the boat come up under the derelict's lee and edge in

abreast of her No. 2 hatch. As she lifted to the crest of a surge the second stood up and sprang. His hands grasped the gunwale and he hauled himself aboard as the boat backed away. The last glimpse Jones had of his young shipmate was his stocky figure running up the ladder just in time to escape the wave that swept across the deck beneath him.

Because his big lower lip was trembling so much Jones had difficulty in putting his feelings into words. For the first time in his life he was about to stand up to authority and speak his mind.

"It's murder," he stammered. "Plain murder! You've had it in for him all the voyage. If that ship goes down with him, Captain Wellshot, you ought to hang for it."

Amazement showed in Captain Wellshot's face—amazement that turned into something like amusement as he said, "God bless my soul, Mr. Jones! I never thought you had it in you. How ever did you work yourself up to that?"

But the mate's burst of courage had evaporated, leaving him too nervous to say another word. For half an hour he stared moodily at the *Lotus Creek*, expecting each sluggish dip of her bows to be the last. Less than one hundred yards to leeward of her the *Torakina's* boat swooped to the rise and fall of the waves.

When the oars dipped together, the boat crawled slowly forward and in spite of himself Jones said, "He's safe! They're moving in to take him off."

Captain Wellshot didn't bother to answer. Having already seen his second mate drop a rope ladder over the side he was concerned now only with the business of getting the *Torakina* as close to the boat as possible. Apart from curt helm orders he said nothing until the boat came alongside and Bill Carew climbed to the bridge.

"Well, Mr. Carew," he said then. "What's the situation?"

"Numbers One and Two holds appear to be completely flooded," Bill reported. "Aft of that she's not making a drop. She must be very soundly constructed because the after bulkhead of Number Two isn't even showing signs of the strain. In my opinion she'll stay afloat indefinitely, especially if this sea doesn't get any worse."

"It *will* get worse." Captain Wellshot shook an impatient fist at the white-capped waves and the drifting grey scud overhead. "Damn it, man, don't you ever use your eyes? It's getting worse every minute."

"I still think she'll stay afloat. She's got enough buoyancy aft to hold that deadweight for'ard." Bill sounded quietly confident, and to

prove his confidence he added, "If you're thinking of towing her, sir, I'd be quite willing to stay aboard her."

"We'll try it," Captain Wellshot announced. "You can take three volunteers with you, Mr. Carew. Young, strong men and good swimmers. If we can get a heavy enough line aboard before the weather gets too bad I'll tow her stern first."

Five hours of backbreaking work for the men on both ships saw the tow secured. Wind and sea had risen, and the little *Torakina* was rearing, plunging and wallowing as she took up the strain of her tow. She might as well have tried to move a stone breakwater. The wind-pressure on her high-cocked stern was causing the *Lotus Creek* to lie almost bow-on to the seas. In that position she was most vulnerable, for the seas crashing over her partially submerged fore-part must eventually break her in halves.

Very gently Captain Wellshot eased the *Torakina* around until she was directly astern of her tow. If he could start her moving it might be possible to swing in a wide arc and gradually bring her stern to the seas. He actually had her swinging when the *Solway Creek* hove in sight. The *Solway Creek* and his tow were sister-ships, the latest additions to the Creek line, and Captain Wellshot was by no means pleased to see the newcomer. Captain Thompson, her master, was a shrewd, capable seaman who would immediately see that the *Torakina* was attempting a job far beyond her powers.

"If he starts looking for trouble," Captain Wellshot informed Jones grimly, "he'll get more than he bargains for."

He was hooked on to a really nice lump of salvage money, and he had no intention of letting it go for anyone.

But Captain Thompson was not looking for trouble. He had arrived on the scene with a definite purpose in view, and was too much of a diplomat to start sending signals which could easily be misunderstood and would almost certainly antagonise Captain Wellshot. Instead, despite the steadily worsening sea, he had a boat lowered and made a personal call.

"Good-afternoon, Wellshot," he said, smiling pleasantly and shaking the water from his cap. "Nice boating weather, isn't it?"

Captain Wellshot grunted non-committally, wondering how long it would take his visitor to come to the point.

"You must have had a devil of a job getting that line aboard her."

"No. The weather has got considerably worse since I took her in tow." Captain Wellshot deliberately stressed the last few words.

"And we haven't seen the worst of it yet by any means," the visitor suggested quietly. "I'm afraid we're in for a nasty sort of a blow."

Nor'-easter

The straw broom of the nor'-easter sweeps the beach.
Yellow, raking straws of sand, stinging, cleansing, scratch
My raw legs; but no woman can I see
My head hung low, while she is ranting at me.
Not my day; not a day for dogs, or gulls,
Or canvas flapping. Cleaning the beach, squalls
Threatening, cumulus cumbersome in the hills
Of the sea-littoral; this wind kills
All joy of the beach, is a steamroller wife
Of a man by the sea. All my life
I have been suddenly subdued when she blows.
Only some little good in all her bluster shows:
She cleans the beach, sweeps, beats the sand.
For the white strand of her morning, I once took her hand.

JOHN BLIGHT

Dinghies

Dinghies, those disreputable carts of the sea,
Driverless, and horseless, idle on the mud;
Out-of-date, yet still suffered; tied up
—As if they'd bolt—with chains to the jetty.
Touch one, and watch the red furious blood
Rising in some Lilliput admiral. Top
Of the tide, and they're jostling like wild
Sea-chariots. Never was a tribe of midgets, but
They were like these little, pugnacious,
Racial upstarts; these sea-carts that a child
Can overload and lord it over. Put
One in the tide-race, where its spacious
Flat veranda-bottom entices kicks
And the sea will kick; show how a cart rocks.

JOHN BLIGHT

Sea-Wasp

I know the animals with heads and eyes
—Even pinpointed in insects—and hold some hope
They will know me, see me: but the sea's
Creatures not always animate in a shape
Even of familiar ferocity, hunt
In the shapeless guise of spirits, ghosts,
The conventional ghosts: no back, no front;
Head, if any, under a sheet-shape; hosts
Of a spirit-world. Isn't the sea eerie? Who . . .
What . . . but that dreadful sea-wasp loitering in the tide,
Deadly tropical jellyfish with the whips few
Suspect in his glass-clear skirts, can ride
More ghost-like down the current, shock
A swimmer to death, yet ineffectual look?

JOHN BLIGHT

The Blanket

I found that blanket branded "Alice Springs",
and made my bed with it in stones and sand
where like a lyre the casuarina sings
across a region like a shrivelled hand.

And I, too, lost it in some place, for then
possessions wearied me, and it seemed best
to travel light and clean as other men
who tramped towards a campfire in the west;

who came and made their fires beside those scant
waterholes where thin acacias dream
and painted-finches drink, or the hesitant
red-gold-ringleted lorikeets swoop and scream.

ROLAND E. ROBINSON

The Dancers

I reached that waterhole, its mud designed
by tracks of egret, finch and jabiroo,
while in the coming night the moon declined:
a feather floating from a cockatoo.

Ten paces more and there, in painted mime,
against the mountain like a stone-axe dropped,
the spirit-trees stood stricken from the time
the song-sticks, song-man and the drone-pipe stopped.

Some thrust their arms and hands out in the air,
and some were struck, contorted, on their knees;
and deep and still the leaves like unbound hair
lay over limbs and torsos of those trees.

Over their limbs their night-still tresses slept;
faint in the stars a wandering night-bird creaked.
Then, as towards their company I stepped,
the whole misshapen tribe awoke and shrieked.

And, beating from their limbs and leaves, white birds,
like spirits in a terror of strange birth,
streamed out with harsh and inarticulate words
above the plains, mountains and trees of earth.

ROLAND E. ROBINSON

Altjeringa

Nude, smooth, and giant-huge,
the torsos of the gums
hold up the vast dark cave
as the great moon comes;

shock-headed black-boy stands
with rigid, thrusting spear,
defiant and grotesque
against that glistening sphere;

in clenched, contorted birth
black banksias agonise;
out of the ferns and earth,
half-formed, beast-boulders rise;

because The Bush goes back,
back to a time unknown:
chaos that had not word,
nor image carved on stone.

ROLAND E. ROBINSON

Ray Maley

Growing Up

THE little boy sat quietly in the corner of the old box-like carriage as the train tugged slowly and urgently at its rumbling retinue. Outside the pattern of green fields stretched a mile or two until they merged almost imperceptibly into the grey-black folds of the foot-hills. Beyond, the coastal mountain range was the backdrop which closed out the rest of the world. But for the most part his eyes now were glued to the telegraph lines which swung between the posts at short intervals within the railway lines' own domain measured off by the grey wooden three-bar fence.

He followed the wires up and down with his eyes. Down now from a post to the bottom of their gentle arc then as gently up again to the fleeting jolt from his vision as once again they grabbed at the insulators and as quickly let go. It was rather like being on a seesaw, he thought, or perhaps riding on the "scenic railway" that his father had told him about.

The thought of his father jerked his attention unwillingly to the big man opposite in the other corner seat against the window, riding with his back to the engine so that the boy "would not get train sick". As if he would get sick. As if he would be sick like the little sister who sat on his mother's lap beside him.

Ordinarily he would have been enjoying the trip home as much as the trip down. Then he had had the fun of pointing out things that no one else in the family had seen—the odd black sheep (it was really brown) in the flock of lovely woolly creatures; the horses, racehorses for sure, at the lovely farm standing out in memory as clearly now as when he had seen it, white walls and verandas covered with the creeper with the purple flowers all hanging downwards. Then, the holiday had just been starting; now it was rushing to its end and every turn of the wheels beneath him meant going back to school and a year to wait until the family came away again.

The boy's reverie was interrupted by the voice of his father.

"Johnny, would you like a drink of something at the next station?"

"No, Dad."

"No what?" his mother's voice interposed gently at his side.

"No thanks, Dad," he muttered automatically and settled down once again to watching the telegraph lines and listening to the clattering rhythm of the constant argument between wheels and lines.

The parents exchanged a glance, unseen by the boy, and the father raised his eyebrows and gave a gently expressive shrug. What was there to do about it? For days the boy had been drawn into his shell. Polite, politely interested, but the childish enthusiasm had gone and nothing in his behaviour to show why. His father looked down at him tenderly and said no more.

The boy's attitude had changed somewhere during the week just past, but no amount of cajoling had won any indication from him where it had begun.

It was perhaps best to leave things as they were. No good to take him by the hand and try to have a heart-to-heart talk. That had been all right in the past but now Johnny was going on for ten and it was time to make a man of him. Too much of that sort of pampering wasn't going to do any good and for that matter he got all he needed, perhaps too much, of that sort of thing from the quiet woman beside him.

He wanted to protect the boy but he wanted him to grow up tough too; tough enough to stand up to things for himself. The outdoor life was what he needed, football and things like that to balance the petting that his mother could not help giving him.

The big man idly picked up the magazine beside him and flicked its pages through to see what he would read, felt in his pockets absently for the cigarettes and matches, lit up, and relaxed.

The boy's eyes flickered from the view outside on to his father, turned slowly to take in the rest of the compartment. The family of four had it to themselves. Thus, in the two luggage racks overhead there was plenty of room for the suit-cases and the hat-boxes, the cane carrying-bag in which the mother had packed the lunch of sandwiches and fruit and the thermos flask of tea that, in some magic way, stayed hot for hours and hours. Below the luggage racks on either side of the carriage was a square mirror and frosted into the surfaces were the letters N.S.W.G.R. He had worked out the New South Wales part and guessed that the fifth letter stood for "railway"; but the G was strange. And he wasn't going to ask anyone about it anyway. Flanking the mirrors were big photographs—one with a scene very much like what was passing outside the train but the other

was of a sweep of mountains, snow covered and vast and the description underneath "Snow scene in the Australian Alps". He craned his neck to look at the two pictures above his head on the wall on his side of the carriage. Here were some sad-looking cows and in the second a view of the coastline with beaches stretching into the distance and in the foreground a fisherman, rod in hand, casting out into the waves breaking over the rocks on which he stood.

The picture of the fisherman brought it back. The holiday had been wonderful up to then and the boy began to live again through the two beautiful weeks of midsummer glow that had just passed.

Every year for as long as he could remember summer had meant the holiday and the two weeks with his father. There were his mother and sister, of course, but they really didn't come into the picture except as vague and comfortable company. There to look after clothes and things, but the holiday was really his and his father's. Each year it had been the same boarding-house where the people knew them and welcomed them every year. "So you're back again. Well, now, let's see if we can make you comfortable. You must be tired after the journey." But he had never been tired after the journey; and with a quick change from his good clothes there was everything to explore all over again.

The fishing village teetered on the edge of the river. Some of the older houses were built right up to the water and the people could almost step out of their front doors into their small rowing boats. The boarding-house, two stories high with verandas running around two sides of it, sat back sedately behind its sweep of buffalo lawn. A path led down to its own jetty and the boats including the big launch that the men used for their fishing trips. How many times had he watched enviously as it chugged its way from this point where the sluggish tidal river joined the bay to its favoured spots far out on the grey-blue sea.

Down near the mouth of the river the shipbuilders were working this year, as last, on a wooden trawler—only this time the ship they were building was nearer being finished than last year when only a keel and the ribs, like an unfinished and upended birdcage, were there to clamber over after the men had finished their work and gone home for the day. This year the ship was nearly ready for the sea.

He could see the men at work from where he stood on the upper veranda. As soon as he could he would be down there to watch them, swinging the adzes with a lazy skill, trimming the planks to make a deck on which he could strut in a game of captains and sailors when no one was around.

There was fishing too, off the jetty for the little yellowtails. They would please his father because they were good bait for catching the surface fish, the mackerels and kingfish, with a stout cord line slung over the stern of the launch as the men made out for the snapper grounds near the heads of the wide enclosed bay.

Dad had promised him this year that if the other men didn't mind he would take him on one of these trips. Boy, wouldn't that be something to tell the other kids back home?

He was immensely content as he looked around him. He had seen other children down near the jetty as he and the family had arrived and it wouldn't take long to make friends with them. It was the same every Christmas holidays and just like going to school for the first time. They would be distant at first, jealous of the friendships already made and not keen to accept a newcomer into their secret councils. But after a day or so he would be a member of the tribe and equally suspicious of the children who would turn up later. You suffered for a while. But soon, in the way of children, it was your turn to be lofty and condescending and even a bit cruel to the stranger.

The fishing trip came in the second week. He had plagued his father daily as he saw him get his lines ready for the frequent trips that the men made. He had been there to see them go and had watched the launch out of sight as it dipped and rose on the gentle swell that swept across the bay from the distant entrance; he had been there at the jetty to welcome them back, to admire the snapper and the pike and the teraglin, the red bream and the squire, the morwong and the brilliant parrot fish. He knew them all and the ritual was always the same.

"Which ones did you catch, Dad?" and if Dad had caught the biggest the day was all the better for it.

On the rough days the men would look like real fishermen as they wrapped themselves in their rainproof coats and put their ancient hats on. "Were you sick, Dad?" and if Dad hadn't been sick it only confirmed what he already knew—that Dad was the best fisherman of the lot. The ultimate triumph was if everyone else had been sick and Dad hadn't, and Dad had caught the best fish. Then he was the boasting king of the small fishermen of the jetty.

The day had been rough, and Dad hadn't been sick and the fishing in spite of the weather had been good.

"When *can* I come with you, Dad?" he had asked that night and Dad had promised to see about it.

He was ready for bed when the answer had come that he could go, and try as he might it was hours before he could sleep.

Morning had found him up and ready long before dawn, long before anyone else. There was the interminable impatient waiting, the excitement of a cup of scalding tea and cold sandwiches in the kitchen, taken almost stealthily for fear of waking up the sleepers, the thrill of moving down the river and over the bar in the pre-dawn half-light and the ecstasy of being allowed to stand on the cabin on the launch, holding on to the stubby, swaying mast, legs spread like a sailor as he had seen the men do even though the sea was swelling and falling as gently as someone breathing in sleep.

The sun had risen out of the sea before the man at the tiller decided that the grounds had been reached, but long since all the lines had been readied and he had taken up his position beside his father near the stern of the boat and out of the way of the other men.

The breeze which had been gentle when they set out had risen slightly, but he was too intent at first watching his line in the water to notice the queasiness that the long slow swell was bringing with it. His head ached a little and moisture cloyed the back of his tongue. He stole a glance at his father nonchalantly rolling a cigarette, the gut line poised carefully over his right forefinger, plaster wrapped to stop the singing line cutting to the bone when the big ones came on.

"They're biting," said someone up at the front of the boat and a moment later: "Got him" and the line began to come in hand over hand.

His neighbour seized the landing net and while the lucky one kept the line taut leaned far over the side, eased the big net under and around the fish and brought it kicking elliptically into the well of the launch.

More fish came in, but the aching head was getting worse and the boy lost interest as he fought to stop himself being sick.

His father was watching him so he mustn't let him know. To be sick on his first trip . . . it mustn't happen. His line stayed slack. There were no fish for him and he was glad, for now he felt he could not have pulled even a yellowtail up into the boat.

He was sick. There was no doubt of it. He would have to lie down somewhere, anywhere. And then there it was. He vomited over the side and his father looked down at him.

Sickness killed shame and there were tears in his eyes as he looked at his father.

What would Dad say? And what would the other men say? But

they were too busy to take any notice as his father grabbed the old straw broom from the deck, dipped it in the water and scrubbed away where he had been sick on the side of the boat.

The boy's father looked long at him sitting quietly in the corner near the stern.

What will I say to him? Sympathy? In front of the men? But I have to make a man of him. His mother would hold him in her arms and nurse him; but that's no good. He has to learn to be tough, to take it and come up smiling.

"What's the matter, son?" He wanted to sympathise, to tell him to take it easily and perhaps the sickness would go away, to put some cool water on his forehead, but that would be mollycoddling. No, not that. Treat him toughly and he'll toughen up. That was it.

The problem solved, the father looked down into the face of the sick little boy and laughed.

The laughter broke the silence surrounding the absorbed men whose ears had grown used to and eliminated from consciousness the other morning sounds, the slap of the water against the boat, the screech of the scavenging sea-birds.

They looked around and saw the boy in his corner and the man standing above him looking down, the harsh laugh dying away. Some of them laughed too and turned back to their lines.

"He's sick," the father said. "Couldn't take the little bit of a rock we've got this morning."

He turned away and the boy turned his face into the corner. His father had laughed—laughed at him when he was sick.

In the corner of the carriage he looked once again across at the man opposite him half hidden behind his magazine. They couldn't be friends any more and the holidays wouldn't be the same. Dad had made a man of him.

R. S. Porteous

A Deal with Father

CAPTAIN Wellshot stepped from the taxi and grudgingly paid the driver.

If he hadn't watched every penny all his life he wouldn't be the owner of the fine ship lying alongside now. What if she *was* only a small coastal cargo ship grossing a mere 2,053 tons? She was rated A1 at Lloyd's, she would be sailing within the hour with a full cargo, and she was all his. He owned and commanded her.

He'd counted his change, and was about to pick up his suit-case when he caught sight of a slim, hatless girl leaving the wharf. What the devil was his daughter doing down here?

"Hey!" he bellowed, the obvious answer dawning on him. "Sally!"

She turned, waved gaily, blew him a kiss and vanished through the wharf gates.

Except where money was concerned Captain Wellshot was not a hard master. He lived on easy terms with his officers and encouraged conversation at the saloon table. He had even gone to the extent of inviting young Carew, his second mate, home to dinner when they were in Sydney several voyages back.

And what thanks had he got for his kindness? The outcome had been an affair between his daughter and a jumped-up young second mate who probably spent every penny of his salary as soon as he drew it.

"When we're in this port you can find some other way to fill in your spare time," he'd informed Bill Carew. "But keep away from my house. That's an order. I've got nothing against you personally, but I don't intend to let my daughter get herself involved in an affair with a seaman. Any seaman. Is that clear?"

And being an ambitious young officer Bill Carew simply said, "Aye, aye, sir."

Captain Wellshot felt reasonably certain now that he had been defied. Why else had Sally come down to the ship just before sailing-time? Certainly not to say good-bye to him; she'd already done that

at home. Yet without making himself look ridiculous he couldn't ask his second mate what his daughter was doing on the wharf.

Standing on the wharf, glaring at his second mate so unconcernedly superintending the singling-up of the stern lines, Captain Wellshot failed to notice what would have been apparent to a casual observer. There was a definite resemblance between himself and young Carew. Both were short, broad-shouldered men and, though age had thickened Captain Wellshot's waistline and let the once-square shoulders droop a little, in his youth he must have been very like this agile, slim-hipped young man. But more noticeable still was the similarity of the lower jaws—determined, out-thrust jaws that made one wonder what the outcome would be if these two ever crossed swords.

"I'll make you sit up and take notice, young man," Captain Wellshot muttered as he walked aboard. "Before this voyage is over you won't want to come within a cable's length of any member of the Wellshot family."

During the next three weeks it was obvious to the *Torakina's* crew that the Old Man had it in for the second mate. The only man who appeared to notice nothing unusual in the captain's attitude was the second himself. As Mr. Jones, the first mate, remarked, Bill Carew was proving a tiger for punishment.

"Why is he making such a set at you this voyage?" he asked Bill Carew as he handed over the watch one wet, blustering evening. "He don't ever let up."

Bill shrugged his broad shoulders and said airily, "Maybe he doesn't like the cut of my jib."

"Blowed if I can see what he could have against it." Pelican Jones was not noted for his sense of humour. "Why, it's the dead-spit of his own. I thought you must be some relation of his when you first come aboard."

"You must have second sight," Bill said, and laughed at the puzzled expression on his senior's face.

The mate caressed his huge nose thoughtfully and moved away.

"Thank the Lord I'm not mixed up in it," he muttered.

It was his watch below, and he didn't intend to spend one extra minute on the cheerless rain-swept bridge. Securely wedged in his bunk he could forget the wet blackness of the night and let the officer of the watch worry about the discomfort and lack of visibility. He wouldn't be disturbed again until four o'clock next morning, and by that time the weather might have cleared.

Jones was wrong on both points. At eleven-thirty the wireless

operator came up to the bridge with a message. "A nasty sort of a mix-up," he informed the second, handing him the slip of paper. "Not far off by the sound of his wireless."

Bill Carew stepped into the chart-room and switched on the shaded light above the chart-table. Tensely worded, the message stated that the Dutch ship *Klumpang* had been in collision with the *Lotus Creek* of Sydney. The *Lotus Creek* was sinking by the head, and though the *Klumpang* was standing by to take off her people she was uncertain of the extent of her own damage. The message ended with the position of the two ships and a request for any vessel in the vicinity to stand by.

Picking up dividers and pencil Bill made a few rapid calculations. "Tell him we expect to be there by daybreak," he told Sparks. "Say about 5 a.m." He gave the helmsman a new course and blew down the voice-pipe to the captain's cabin.

Arriving on the bridge with an oilskin pulled on over his pyjamas Captain Wellshot listened impatiently to his second mate's report. "Who gave you permission to send messages and alter course?" he snapped.

"I thought it was the correct and seamanlike thing to do, sir."

"I do the thinking aboard this ship," Captain Wellshot told him. "The correct thing for a junior officer to do is to send for the master at once. And when I want your advice on what is or isn't seamanlike I'll ask for it." He lumbered into the chart-room, checked his second mate's calculations and then, unable to find fault with them, called the engine-room and asked for all the speed they could give him. "Rouse Mr. Jones," he ordered. "Tell him to have a boat made ready for lowering. He can call for volunteers to man her."

"Aye, aye, sir. Who will be going in charge of the boat?" The second was undoubtedly proving a tiger for punishment. He must have known the question would give his captain one more chance to snub him.

It did. Captain Wellshot said coldly, "If I decide it's necessary to send a boat away, Mr. Carew, I'll detail the officer who can best be spared, to take charge of her."

An hour before dawn the *Klumpang* wirelesslyed that she had taken off all the *Lotus Creek's* people and was proceeding direct to Sydney. She was not in need of assistance. The abandoned *Lotus Creek* was settling by the head and would probably sink before dawn.

The *Torakina* acknowledged the message but held her course. "We've come this far out of our way," Captain Wellshot told Jones, "we might as well see the last of her, if she's still afloat."

In the first grey streaks of dawn they sighted her—a pitiful crippled thing, so far down by the head that the bigger seas broke clean over her foredeck. Captain Wellshot knew her well. Only a few hours ago she had been a fast modern cargo ship of 10,000 tons, the latest addition to the Creek line. Now, from a seaman's point of view, she was nothing but a menace to navigation until she took the final plunge.

But *was* she? Captain Wellshot scanned her carefully, constantly checking the angle from her depressed bow to her high-cocked stern. He reduced the *Torakina* to half speed and slowly circled the stricken ship. Since she'd stayed afloat so long there was just a possibility . . .

"She doesn't seem to be getting any lower in the water, sir," Bill Carew volunteered, voicing his captain's thoughts.

Captain Wellshot ignored him, and old Pelican Jones shook his head sadly. The second, it seemed, would never learn to keep his mouth shut.

"Mr. Carew." Captain Wellshot spoke at last, tossing the name over his shoulder and keeping his eyes fixed on the *Lotus Creek*. "Do you think you are capable of boarding that ship without endangering the lives of a boat's crew?"

Taken by surprise, Bill said, "Certainly, sir. There isn't a really heavy sea running."

"I didn't ask for your opinion on the sea," Captain Wellshot snapped. "I'm capable of judging that for myself. The point I'm making is that I don't want a boatload of men dragged down if that ship takes a sudden plunge to the bottom. Get aboard her and tell them to lie off till you're ready to come back. Make a thorough inspection and find out what shape she's in. The bosun can take charge of the boat while you're aboard, but tell him to keep well clear. I'll drop you to windward of her and then pick you up in her lee—if she lasts that long."

Mr. Jones watched the manoeuvre in silence. It would be wet and infernally uncomfortable in that boat, he knew, but not dangerous for skilled seamen. Even boarding the derelict would be comparatively easy for an active young man if he watched his chance and boarded her for'ard of the bridge, where she was low in the water.

But what then? To examine that ship thoroughly the second would have to go below. He'd be groping around in semi-darkness in the bowels of a strange ship that might at any minute plunge to the bottom. And if that happened he wouldn't stand a chance. Never had old Pelican Jones felt so nervous, so undecided.

He watched the boat come up under the derelict's lee and edge in

abreast of her No. 2 hatch. As she lifted to the crest of a surge the second stood up and sprang. His hands grasped the gunwale and he hauled himself aboard as the boat backed away. The last glimpse Jones had of his young shipmate was his stocky figure running up the ladder just in time to escape the wave that swept across the deck beneath him.

Because his big lower lip was trembling so much Jones had difficulty in putting his feelings into words. For the first time in his life he was about to stand up to authority and speak his mind.

"It's murder," he stammered. "Plain murder! You've had it in for him all the voyage. If that ship goes down with him, Captain Wellshot, you ought to hang for it."

Amazement showed in Captain Wellshot's face—amazement that turned into something like amusement as he said, "God bless my soul, Mr. Jones! I never thought you had it in you. How ever did you work yourself up to that?"

But the mate's burst of courage had evaporated, leaving him too nervous to say another word. For half an hour he stared moodily at the *Lotus Creek*, expecting each sluggish dip of her bows to be the last. Less than one hundred yards to leeward of her the *Torakina's* boat swooped to the rise and fall of the waves.

When the oars dipped together, the boat crawled slowly forward and in spite of himself Jones said, "He's safe! They're moving in to take him off."

Captain Wellshot didn't bother to answer. Having already seen his second mate drop a rope ladder over the side he was concerned now only with the business of getting the *Torakina* as close to the boat as possible. Apart from curt helm orders he said nothing until the boat came alongside and Bill Carew climbed to the bridge.

"Well, Mr. Carew," he said then. "What's the situation?"

"Numbers One and Two holds appear to be completely flooded," Bill reported. "Aft of that she's not making a drop. She must be very soundly constructed because the after bulkhead of Number Two isn't even showing signs of the strain. In my opinion she'll stay afloat indefinitely, especially if this sea doesn't get any worse."

"It *will* get worse." Captain Wellshot shook an impatient fist at the white-capped waves and the drifting grey scud overhead. "Damn it, man, don't you ever use your eyes? It's getting worse every minute."

"I still think she'll stay afloat. She's got enough buoyancy aft to hold that deadweight for'ard." Bill sounded quietly confident, and to

prove his confidence he added, "If you're thinking of towing her, sir, I'd be quite willing to stay aboard her."

"We'll try it," Captain Wellshot announced. "You can take three volunteers with you, Mr. Carew. Young, strong men and good swimmers. If we can get a heavy enough line aboard before the weather gets too bad I'll tow her stern first."

Five hours of backbreaking work for the men on both ships saw the tow secured. Wind and sea had risen, and the little *Torakina* was rearing, plunging and wallowing as she took up the strain of her tow. She might as well have tried to move a stone breakwater. The wind-pressure on her high-cocked stern was causing the *Lotus Creek* to lie almost bow-on to the seas. In that position she was most vulnerable, for the seas crashing over her partially submerged fore-part must eventually break her in halves.

Very gently Captain Wellshot eased the *Torakina* around until she was directly astern of her tow. If he could start her moving it might be possible to swing in a wide arc and gradually bring her stern to the seas. He actually had her swinging when the *Solway Creek* hove in sight. The *Solway Creek* and his tow were sister-ships, the latest additions to the Creek line, and Captain Wellshot was by no means pleased to see the newcomer. Captain Thompson, her master, was a shrewd, capable seaman who would immediately see that the *Torakina* was attempting a job far beyond her powers.

"If he starts looking for trouble," Captain Wellshot informed Jones grimly, "he'll get more than he bargains for."

He was hooked on to a really nice lump of salvage money, and he had no intention of letting it go for anyone.

But Captain Thompson was not looking for trouble. He had arrived on the scene with a definite purpose in view, and was too much of a diplomat to start sending signals which could easily be misunderstood and would almost certainly antagonise Captain Wellshot. Instead, despite the steadily worsening sea, he had a boat lowered and made a personal call.

"Good-afternoon, Wellshot," he said, smiling pleasantly and shaking the water from his cap. "Nice boating weather, isn't it?"

Captain Wellshot grunted non-committally, wondering how long it would take his visitor to come to the point.

"You must have had a devil of a job getting that line aboard her."

"No. The weather has got considerably worse since I took her in tow." Captain Wellshot deliberately stressed the last few words.

"And we haven't seen the worst of it yet by any means," the visitor suggested quietly. "I'm afraid we're in for a nasty sort of a blow."

"Oh, I don't know. It'll probably take up before morning." Captain Wellshot walked to the wing of the bridge and glanced aft at his tow. "She's coming around nicely, Mr. Jones," he said, assuming an air of hearty satisfaction.

Very wisely Jones kept his opinions to himself, and Captain Thompson said, "I must say I appreciate your efforts, Wellshot. If we get her into port I'll see that my owners reward you suitably."

"Thanks, Thompson, but when *I* get my tow into port I'll be quite prepared to accept whatever the salvage court awards me."

Captain Thompson's attitude changed abruptly. "Let's not waste any more time, Wellshot," he said. "I'm here on behalf of the owners—to protect their interests, so I'm asking you to cast off your tow and let me take over."

"Nothing doing, Thompson. You're wasting your breath. You know as well as I do that the salvors who are first in possession have a vested interest and a right to exclusive possession. That's maritime law."

"Since you know so much about maritime law you'll remember that that particular clause finishes up, 'provided they are capable of saving the property'. The port of Brisbane is less than ninety miles away, but with this wind and sea against you it might as well be nine thousand. You've got the mainland to leeward, and while you're messing about you'll have one of our best ships on the beach, a total wreck."

"Who says so?"

"I do. In taking over this tow I'm acting as the owners' representative. In other words, Wellshot, I'm here to assert their rights."

"*Their* rights!" Captain Wellshot's jaw jutted even farther forward and his voice rose to an angry roar. "Your blasted owners forfeited all rights when their crew abandoned the ship. Legally she's my salvage now, and I'll thank you to get to hell off my ship before I lose my temper."

The visitor left. But as he turned away he smiled and said, "Famous last words, eh, Wellshot? Well, perhaps you'd better hear mine. I came here to protect my owners' interests and that's exactly what I intend to do. I advise you to get your men off the *Lotus Creek*, otherwise you'll only have yourself to blame if anyone gets hurt."

By nightfall Captain Wellshot had swung his tow stern-on to wind and sea, and, allowing for a very considerable drift, was headed in the general direction of Brisbane. The fact that he was making no headway worried him not at all. He knew, better than anyone, that his ship was incapable of towing the *Lotus Creek* against this weather,

and for the present his only anxiety was that his towline would carry away before darkness gave him a chance to elude the *Solway Creek*. Throughout the afternoon blinding rain-squalls had frequently hidden her from view, but the clearing of each squall revealed her wallowing to the grey seas, patiently waiting for the inevitable.

"Like a damned vulture," Captain Wellshot growled.

Darkness. Wind-driven rain that lashed down, stinging the faces and hands of the men on the *Torakina's* bridge, blotting out everything but the vague shape of their tow. No passing squall this, but storm-bred rain that might continue for hours, or even days. Captain Wellshot wiped his streaming face and chuckled. Nothing could have suited his purpose better.

"Have a hand stationed aft to watch the towline, Mr. Jones," he ordered. "Give him your whistle and tell him to blow like hell if it carries away. When you've done that, go below and darken ship. Tell all hands I don't want a single light to show." He switched off the navigation lights and said to the helmsman, "Starb'd a little. Ease her round gently and steady her on nor'-west."

Pelican Jones was a firm believer in the old seamen's rule, "Obey orders if you break owners." Though strongly disapproving of the order to darken ship he carried it out faithfully and returned to the bridge. The helmsman had the *Torakina* steamed on her new course, but Jones had no need to look at the compass to know they were now running before the storm.

Groping his way to his captain's side he asked nervously, "How long do you intend holding this course, sir?"

"How long? Use your imagination, Jones. We'd never make headway against this sea. I'm heading for the Breaksea Spit Lightship. If we can hang to our tow till we round Breaksea Spit I'll lie up in Hervey Bay till the weather takes up."

Pelican Jones gasped. For the moment he was incapable of saying anything. Breaksea Spit! Nearly 100 storm-tossed miles away! And all the time a following sea would be pounding over the half-submerged forepart of their tow!

"She'll break in half in two hours on this course," he predicted, finding his voice at last.

"It's a risk we've got to take if we want to give Thompson the slip. And after all, Jones, half a ship is better than no ship." As if he agreed with the logic of that statement Jones remained silent. Ten minutes later he delivered the longest speech Captain Wellshot had ever heard him make.

"Captain," he said. "I've been a seaman all my life. I know my

duty, and I've always carried it out to the best of my ability in a seamanlike manner. I'll continue to do it, under protest, until this voyage ends, when I'll ask you to pay me off. I always knew you were a hard man where money was concerned, but I never expected to see you throwing away men's lives for the sake of financial gain. You talk about having to take the risk of that ship breaking up, but it's the four men aboard her who'll pay for the risk—with their lives. All you'll lose will be a few fathoms of towline."

"*And a nice packet of salvage money,*" Captain Wellshot reminded him. "Don't forget that if I get this ship into port your share will be a nice help to you in your retirement. The court will award you that, though God knows you've done nothing to earn it except squeal about impossibilities and murderers."

Conditions aboard the *Lotus Creek* were less violent, firstly because she was a much bigger ship and secondly because the weight of water in her for'ard holds was making her sluggish. But to offset the lack of physical discomfort the men aboard her had to listen to the roar of seas swirling over her foredeck, the booming thuds as bigger waves burst against the superstructure and the incessant groaning of the labouring ship.

"Why don't he hold our stern to the seas?" one of the seamen asked. "Any fool can tell she won't last long on this course. You'd think he was tryin' to drown us."

He wasn't a nervous type, nor did he suffer from a too-vivid imagination. He'd volunteered for this job and he felt justified in voicing his opinion.

"He's doing the only thing he can do," Bill Carew explained. "He's running for Hervey Bay until the weather takes up."

Because it was the type of thing he himself would have attempted had he been in command Bill had guessed his captain's intentions as soon as both ships swung northward in the darkness. He did not approve of running without light in foul weather, but there was nothing he could do about it. The *Lotus Creek*'s emergency lamps were somewhere in her flooded forepart, as inaccessible as if they had been at the bottom of the ocean.

Actually there was very little he could do about anything beyond keeping a hand stationed aft to watch the towline while he made frequent inspections with the aid of a rather feeble torch.

When the towline parted shortly before dawn Bill was only surprised that it had held so long. What now? he wondered. The *Torakina* would undoubtedly be standing by, invisible in the darkness, but there was nothing she could do beyond trying to pick them up if

they had to swim for it. It would be impossible to pass another towline until the weather moderated, and by that time it might easily be too late.

A pale dawn struggled through the clouds and rain to reveal the battered *Lotus Creek*, grey seas bursting over her, grey clouds overhead, and all around her, hemming her in, a grey curtain of rain. Of the *Torakina* there was no sign. She might have been hove to within two hundred yards of her tow—or searching vainly ten miles away. Once having lost touch it would be sheer luck if she made contact again.

With no fire in the galley, breakfast was a cheerless meal, rendered even more gloomy by one of the seamen pointing out the hopelessness of their situation.

"Let's leave the bitch before she sinks under us," he pleaded. And though his two shipmates supported him Bill scoffed at the idea.

"We're safer here than we could be trying to get the boat away," he said. "She's not getting any lower in the water and ships in worse shape than this made port during the war. We're drifting in towards Hervey Bay. By midday we should be in sight of the Breaksea Spit Lightship." He managed to sound confident though he could only guess vaguely at their position.

"How do we know she won't pile up on the Spit?"

It was a shrewd, unanswerable question, but Bill said, "We'll start forcing her to the nor'ard now. We'll get some sail on her, aft."

Working sometimes waist-deep in swirling water they salvaged tarpaulins washed from the for'ard hatches. They dug out spares and even stripped some from the after hatches. Secured in the after rigging and sheeted home to catch the wind they made a brave showing of canvas when viewed from the deck. The spirits of the seamen rose as each square was set.

"That'll lift her along," they told each other cheerfully.

But Bill had no such illusions. A dozen pocket handkerchiefs would probably have had as much effect on the drift of the ship. His only concern was to keep the men occupied, to spar for time in the hope that the weather would moderate and allow the *Torakina* to pick them up and tow them to safety. Much better for the men to work in the pouring rain than to huddle in the shelter of the bridge speculating morbidly on their fate.

They were still working when the *Torakina* loomed up through the rain. She came from down-wind, rearing, reeling and plunging, deluging herself in spray as she worked up abreast of her charge. Compared with the sluggish rise and fall of the *Lotus Creek* her antics resembled

a skittish filly gambolling alongside a ponderous old elephant. From her wildly swaying bridge an aldis lamp blinked feverishly.

"Ain't she chuckin' herself about? Makes a man seasick to watch her," one of the men said. "What's she sayin', Second?"

"She says she'll pass another line as soon as the weather eases a bit," Bill lied.

He was the only one who could read the message, and he wasn't going to tell the others that the *Torakina* was advising them to abandon ship immediately. Instead he scrambled to the bridge and displayed the negative flag. He'd come this far with the *Lotus Creek* and he didn't intend to abandon her now. While she stayed afloat there was always a hope of saving her.

Half an hour later he acknowledged a message telling him he was drifting on to Breaksea Spit, but still he made no move to abandon ship. Time enough to leave her when he had seen with his own eyes that the end was inevitable, he decided.

But when he did sight the Spit it was too late to leave. The shoaling water produced a confused and broken sea that made the launching of a boat absolutely impossible. It would have been suicidal to attempt it. Nor was there any question of swimming to the *Torakina* now. Very sensibly she had stood out to sea and vanished in the rain.

In a wet, dispirited group, each nervously fingering his lifejacket, the four men clustered on the poop. Dimly through the rain they could see the tree-clad tip of Fraser Island, and, stretching northward from it, line after line of combers bursting in a welter of dirty yellow foam across the submerged sand-spit. Their approach to it was slow, painfully slow for men aware that there was no escape now. They could pick out the exact spot where their ship would strike—close to the tip of the island where the sea was most turbulent. No line of breakers there, but a mad, crisscross jumble of waves that swirled, twisted, collided and toppled in crazy confusion.

"What a spot to pick," the youngest seaman moaned. "A man couldn't swim two yards in that."

No one bothered to answer. The statement was so obviously true. There was deeper water under that confusion, Bill guessed. One of the many channels scoured through the sand-spit. Possibly, being close to the island, it was the deepest channel of all, but the chances of it being deep enough to float the *Lotus Creek*, even though it was nearly high water, were too remote to consider. Nothing could be gained by holding out false hopes now.

In miserable silence they watched her drift slowly into the turmoil. They clung grimly to the rail, shuddering as they felt the first heavy

jar of the ship striking bottom. Time after time she struck, lifting sluggishly and settling down again, each time with a thud that made her whole frame vibrate. Even the heavy booming of surf along the Spit could not drown the shriek of tortured metal in her damaged forepart.

It was Bill who first noticed that she had not actually come to a stop, and that the impact of her thuds was becoming less violent. "She's dragging herself over!" he yelled. "If she keeps this up we'll be in calm water soon."

"If she drags out of this without pounding herself to pieces," the others said, "we can take to the boat and let her sink."

Half an hour later they were lowering the boat in the comparatively calm waters of Hervey Bay. The thunderous booming of surf on the Spit was now music to their ears for instead of being their destroyer the Spit was now safeguarding their lives by giving them a protective lee. Their ship was afloat and outwardly she appeared little the worse for her pounding.

"She'll stay afloat," Bill announced. "Pay the boat out on a line astern and we'll get the canvas off her. If we can steady her drift the *Torakina* should show up in time to tow us to a safe anchorage."

While they were still hauling the canvas down the *Torakina* hove in sight. She was flying the signal "Prepare to be taken in tow," and as she came to a stop she lowered a boat.

"Get a light messenger-line ready," Bill ordered. "But don't pass it down to them till I give the word. It looks as though we're going to be honoured by a visit from Captain Wellshot himself."

"I'm coming aboard," Captain Wellshot bellowed as his boat came within hail. "What shape are you in?" he asked as he clambered over the rail. "Did you take much damage on the Spit?"

"I don't think so," Bill answered.

"You're lucky, damned lucky you weren't all drowned. Why the devil didn't you leave her when I signalled you to? Can't you even read plain Morse? Come on, man, don't just stand there saying nothing. Do something. Get those men of yours started on sending a line down while I take a look around."

Very quietly Bill said, "I think you'd better calm down and listen to what I've got to say, Captain. I am not in any urgent need of a tow and I am not passing any line to your ship."

"You're *what*?" Captain Wellshot was obviously doubting his own ears.

"You heard what I said, Captain. This is my ship now, and I'm giving the orders aboard her. You left us in the lurch last night and

we stayed aboard and saved the ship. We sailed her through that passage in the Spit. When you *did* show up this morning your sole contribution was to advise us to abandon her. Then, when you thought we were going aground, you cleared out and left us to drown."

"You, you infernal young upstart! I did my best to save you right up to the last. You don't think I'd risk having my ship driven aground on the Spit do you? I had to take her right round outside the Lightship in an effort to get here in time to save your miserable neck. And don't try to tell me you saved this ship by hanging those few rags in her rigging. The tail of my shirt would have been as much help."

"We'll see what the salvage court has to say about that. My claim will be that I tried and I succeeded. That should be proof enough. Now I'm in the position where I can get an anchor down and make a deal with a tug or any other ship that comes along. Naturally I'll accept the most reasonable offer."

"You haven't a legal leg to stand on. You're a member of my crew, put aboard this ship under my command. Why, I could . . ." Suddenly Captain Wellshot broke off and strode away. When he returned he had calmed down sufficiently to ask in a normal voice, "What exactly do you want, Carew?"

"Nothing unreasonable," Bill assured him. "I'll naturally press my claim that my efforts materially helped to save the ship. And in addition to what the court awards me I only want you to give Sally and me your blessing. We're planning to get married when I return to Sydney." He grinned cheerfully. "Under the circumstances, sir, I think it would be a fitting gesture on your part if you gave us a wedding cheque for a hundred pounds—out of your share of the salvage. But I won't press that point; it's merely a suggestion."

From amazement Captain Wellshot's expression changed to one of grudging admiration. He was being bluffed and he knew it. He didn't greatly admire what he regarded as Bill's foolhardiness in refusing to abandon the ship, but he *did* admire a man who could outwit him in a financial deal. What a man to have in the family! What an asset to the business! Whilst he didn't want Sally to marry a seaman he felt she could do a lot worse than marry one who knew how to drive a hard bargain.

"It's a deal, young fellow," he said, extending his hand. "Now get that infernal line aboard before we drift ashore."

Alan Marshall

How's Andy Going?

JOE was not particularly fond of running. On those rare occasions when he felt impelled to move at top speed, you could bet your life that McPherson's pet ram, or a cursing swaggie were pounding along a few yards behind him.

Joe ba-a-ed at rams and cast reflections on the drinking habits of swagmen. With his head poking out from behind a convenient tree, he would chant at a passing sundowner:

*Whiskers, Whiskers, fill your gizzard
Till you're flat out like a lizard.*

When pursued by swagmen or rams Joe ran with great resolution, his half-mast pants flapping just below his knees, the chewed tie of his sailor jacket pressed flat against his chest.

Normally, however, Joe favoured sitting down more than running. He liked to sit on a log with his elbows on his knees, watching our dogs sniffing through the bush for rabbits.

Maybe I trained him that way. An attack of polio had forced me to walk on crutches and Joe was the sort of mate who naturally adjusted himself to the limitations of those he liked. He made our walks through the bush a series of journeys from one resting place to another, a mode of progress he came to accept as his own choosing.

"You can't beat sitting down and just looking," he sometimes said when he felt I needed a rest.

Joe looked at everything. An ant was just as interesting to Joe as an elephant to less imaginative schoolmates.

"If an ant was as big as an elephant, it'd belt hell out of him," he pronounced in one of his more thoughtful moments.

Each year, Turalla, the small township three miles from the district in which we lived, held a sports meeting in a ten-acre paddock behind the local pub. On that day the area around the circular track was full of buggies and gigs, their shafts resting on the ground. The fences were lined with tethered horses drooping beneath their harness, and

men moved amongst them talking about the prospect of rain—"We could do with it badly."

At lunch-time the people sat on the grass beside their buggies and ate sandwiches and drank tea they poured from billies. It was a day when men and women gossiped and children ran shouting between the tents and stalls. Everyone attended the sports meeting. Not to attend would have established you as an oddity or as one who had a grudge against members of the committee.

When the first poster appeared on the post office wall the school-children gathered round it in an excited group. From then on till Sports Day their activities were coloured by the events it described; the manner of those who could run or ride bicycles became more condescending, the inferior position of those who couldn't, more marked.

Those boys who had bicycles began talking in terms of racing and rode furiously to school, occasionally yelling to mates: "Take your lap," or "Open up there, I'm coming through."

The runners of the school stood on marks with their fingertips touching the ground, springing away at the shout of "Bang!" and running on their toes in a style they never adopted at other times. They slowed down gradually, their arms outspread and looked to see if the girls were watching them.

Joe and I ignored the change in our mates and adopted an attitude we thought would establish us as persons with long sporting experience. We listened with bored expressions to the claims of school runners and bike riders, but, after a day of strain, Joe cracked and began "toeing the mark", and running in swift dashes past unprepared mates doing a "light canter" round the school yard.

Joe attributed his sudden interest in sport to the influence of his grandfather, a noted runner in his day, but now dead and buried in the Turalla cemetery.

"It's comin' out in me," Joe explained. "I never been fond of runnin' but it's in me blood all right."

Whatever the reason for Joe's transformation, it certainly kept him busy. In the evenings he took off his boots and jumped logs and ran in wide circles with his head tucked down like a gig horse, his arms pumping. He shouted instructions to himself, acclaimed himself and denounced or swore at imaginary runners attempting to prevent him winning. I sat on the grass and watched him, sometimes yelling advice or shouting encouragement.

"Take your time; there's no one near you," I'd cry when Joe went past me.

Joe never went far away; he wanted an audience.

"I'll run anyone in the world," he shouted, looking at the tops of the gums and dancing on his toes before me.

Someone must have accepted the challenge for Joe suddenly cried, "Toe the mark," and went into a crouch. But the other runners must have been crowding him for he began yelling, "Stand back there. Gimme room."

This outburst couldn't have had any effect for he immediately stood upright and growled, "I'll take you on, you cow," and thereat he danced back like a boxer then came in swinging wildly.

"Into him," I yelled. "Let him have it."

This inspired Joe who fought aggressively, his tongue thrust out, both eyes closed. He was set to give his opponent the father of a hiding but Andy appeared.

Andy was Joe's young brother, a boy with an alert, watchful expression, the result of a life spent anticipating violence from either Joe or me. He had not yet started school and it was Joe's job to look after him. Joe was not fond of looking after Andy though Andy was always eager to be placed in his charge.

"What do you want?" Joe asked him, his hands still raised in pugilistic fashion.

"Mum said you've got to look after me," said Andy who was watching us both warily, waiting to see our reaction to his announcement.

"All right," said Joe after hesitating a moment. "You stop here with us and don't go away."

Andy relaxed. "Who're ya fightin', Joe?" he asked.

Joe ignored the question.

"I'll race anyone in the world for a hundred pounds," he cried.

"I'll crawl anyone in the world for a hundred pounds," I sang out in answer, determined to be in it. "I'll crawl you or anyone. I'm the champion crawler of the world."

I began crawling in swift dashes on the grass. Joe became interested. He dropped to his hands and knees and crawled after me, shouting, "Here I come, the greatest crawler who ever lived."

Joe could crawl faster than me but his knees were soft and sometimes he was tempted to raise himself on to his toes.

"Keep your knees on the ground," I ordered.

I was tough in the knees, having crawled a lot in steep places where my crutches were useless.

"Listen," I suggested when we were resting. "How about us holding the crawling championship of the world, eh?"

Joe considered this proposal with an air of dubiety.

"They never have crawling championships," he said at last. "It would be good to have the running championship of the world but not the crawling."

"That's no good to me," I protested. "Where would I get, running?"

"All right." Joe quickly changed his attitude. "We're champions, see, and now we're going to race for the championship of the world."

Andy, who had been listening with respect to what Joe had been saying, ventured the opinion that crawling was "better than anything".

"You're too little to know anything about crawling, Andy," Joe told him.

"He's not tough enough," I added.

Joe and I had suddenly become crawling authorities with years of experience behind us and it was pleasant to be able to patronise Andy.

We decided to hold the crawling championship of the world on the sports ground the next evening. In the centre of the ground a circular, grassed track, a quarter of a mile round, was used for cycling and running events and we decided to crawl round this, quite certain that no one else in the world had crawled this far, a conviction that made the race much more desirable.

We set off for home after arranging to meet early next evening but before we parted Joe drew me aside and whispered, "I'll sneak away from Andy tomorrow. Be ready to get going quick."

Andy watched us whispering together, his expression revealing his awareness of our planning.

"I'll tell Mum if you sneak away from me tomorrow," he warned us.

Joe expressed amazement at such unwarranted suspicion.

"We wouldn't sneak away from you, Andy, would we, Bill?"

"No," I agreed with Joe. "We'd take you anywhere."

"Why, we were just talking about taking you hunting one day, weren't we, Bill?"

I felt Joe was going too far.

"We don't want to take him hunting, Joe," I complained.

Joe thrust his mouth near my ear and hissed impatiently, "I'm only telling him that; we gotta kid to him."

But Joe's plan didn't work out. When he joined me next evening Andy was with him.

"You can't toss Andy when there's anything on," Joe explained morosely. The burden of Andy was heavy on Joe.

Joe and I were both wearing corduroy trousers that reached below our knees and long, cotton stockings that repeated washings had bleached to a faded blue. Our knees were thus protected but Andy wore short socks and his trousers did not reach his knees.

When we reached the sports ground we explained to him that even if he were a much bigger boy the fact that his knees were bare would prevent him crawling a quarter of a mile for the championship of the world, but his expression remained stubborn.

"I wanna crawl with you," he persisted.

"You'll never shift Andy, once he's set on a thing." Joe spoke from long experience of Andy.

While I surveyed the track Joe paraded in circles crying, "Roll up, tumble up for the crawling championship of the world! What you like and what you fancy! The more you ring, the less you get!"

In the course of Joe's life he had gathered quite a number of cries proclaiming something or other, most of them inappropriate to a crawling championship of the world, but he proceeded to use them all on the assumption, no doubt, that they set the stage.

"Hurry, hurry, hurry!" he cried. "Room for three more! Back to the canvas, please! The crawling championship of the world! Women and children half price!"

Andy followed Joe around with great interest. Andy admired Joe when Joe was addressing crowds.

I sat on the grass and took off my boots. I crawled a little way, delighting in the springy feel of the grass beneath my knees.

"It's good, Joe," I cried. "Come an' feel the grass on your knees. They'll never get sore on this."

"The great race is about to begin," announced Joe. He sat down and pulled off his boots then asked, "What about Andy?"

"Hey, Andy!" I called. "You walk beside us and tell us who's leading. You can yell out, 'Into it!' and that sort of thing."

"I want to crawl in the race with you and Joe."

"There you are!" growled Joe. "What did I tell you! He's set on crawling and he won't go ten yards before he'll be howling for us to wait for him."

"If you crawl with us, Andy, we won't wait for you," I warned him.

"I want to crawl with you," Andy persisted.

"Blow him!" exclaimed Joe wrathfully.

"All right," I said to Andy, "you can come," then to Joe, "As soon as he knocks up he'll get up and walk. We won't count him

in the championship. He can run in ahead of us if he likes. It doesn't matter."

"All right," Joe accepted the position. "Now let's all get on the mark."

Joe and I knelt side by side on the track and Andy knelt down just behind us.

"All set!" called Joe. "Bang!" and the crawling championship of the world had begun.

It was a race with plenty of time for conversation. We crawled rather quickly for a few yards until I remembered the distance we had to go.

"Take your time!" I ordered Joe. "Ease up. We haven't got to go fast till the finish."

"Slow the field down," called Joe in a voice of authority, then added in his natural tone, "How's Andy goin'?"

"How ya goin', Andy?" I asked.

"Good," said Andy who was crawling at our heels.

"The grass is good to crawl on, isn't it?" I said to Joe, "but I reckon it'll wear holes in the knees of our socks."

"Take your lap," yelled Joe, crawling ahead.

"Not too far!" I ordered him anxiously.

"My knees are beginning to feel it," complained Joe dropping back. "How are yours?"

"Not bad," I said doubtfully. "I'm going well."

"A quarter of a mile is a long way," pronounced Joe thoughtfully, then changed his tone to question Andy. "How ya goin', Andy?"

"Good."

"There's no doubt about Andy," Joe went on. "He's game, ya know. We should've made him stay home, I reckon. This crawling will knock hell out of him. He's too little for the crawling championship of the world."

Joe's mention of the title inspired a fresh vigour in us.

"Keep it goin'!" yelled Joe. "Open up in front!"

"Take your lap!" I yelled and crawled to the lead.

"By hell, Andy must be sufferin' now!" said Joe impatiently after a period of silence. "How are ya, Andy?"

"Good."

"Ar, he'd say that if he was dying." There were times when Joe felt a great contempt for Andy. "You can't believe anything he says."

"I'm beginning to sweat," I complained.

"I'm sweatin' bad myself," said Joe. "How're your knees?"

"Crook,"

"Mine are hellishun crook. I wonder how Andy's knees are. How're ya knees, Andy?"

"Good."

"He's got me beat," muttered Joe. "How far 've we gone?"

"More than half way, I reckon."

"Hell!"

"Andy must be about done now," I decided after we had crawled some distance in silence.

"Yes, poor little beggar!" Joe felt sorry for Andy. "The grass is not as thick here as when we started."

"It's not bad," I said.

"My knees are about done," Joe confessed. "Andy will be sufferin' bad now. How're ya, Andy?"

"Good."

"That kid can't last much longer," Joe decided. "Anyway, he can't blame us. We told him to keep out."

"I haven't got too much strength left in me," I admitted at last, "but I'll go the distance."

"I'm sufferin' hell in the knees," Joe complained.

"We're nearly there," I said. "Now we got to get into it properly."

"The whips are out," yelled Joe.

"Come on Turalla!" I shouted. "Into it!"

We were urging our aching bodies to crawl still faster when, on my left, a little figure came bobbing along with nodding head and quick-moving knees.

"Hell!" I gasped. "There goes Andy!"

"Strike me!" exclaimed Joe. "What's happened? Andy . . ."

Andy passed us with an eager and excited face, looking straight ahead to where my crutches were lying on the grass. He drew farther and farther away from us until he reached the winning post where he jumped to his feet and called out triumphantly, "I am the champion crawler of the world."

"Blast him!" said Joe, staggering to his feet, "an' he is too."

He hurled some dry cow dung at Andy and shouted, "Get home now or I'll tan you when I get you."

Andy retreated to a safe distance.

Joe lay down beside me moaning, "Oh, my knees!" then added with sudden strength, "I'll murder Andy when I get home, barging into our race and winning like that."

"By cripes, he must be tough!" I said with a new interest in Andy. "I reckon he's the toughest kid in Australia."

"That's right!" exclaimed Joe, sitting up to look at Andy. "He is,

there's no doubt about it. Just look at him there. There's nothing to him and the little beggar goes and wins the crawling championship of the world."

We suddenly became enthusiastic over Andy. We praised him to each other. We recalled feats of endurance we had observed in him.

"In all my life," said Joe fervently, "I've never saw such a crawler as Andy."

"He's better than you or me," I said. "Better than anyone in the world."

We rose to our feet and went over to Andy where he sat alone on the grass. We felt enormously proud of him. Joe put his arm around Andy's shoulders as we walked home together. We boasted about Andy for weeks.

"He's a bloody marvel," said Joe. "An' I'm not talkin'."

The Church

Shadows drip
from buildings.
Zebra dusk
prances the sky.

Angel bells
hover down
and call to prayer
the long men.

Strong the stone
the standing tower
the hands of blood
shall not pull down.

Roof of space
Floor of earth
the church is built
—night.

D'Arcy Niland

The Boy in the Dark

TEN thousand machines had stopped, a thousand fires were banked, a million cogs had come to rest, tongue in groove and sprocket in link: miles of belts had ceased their slapping rolling, and the fly-wheels were dead: the smoke was dying from the mouths of chimneys, and all this was that much noise and energy suspended. And yet the streets were thick with the maze of workers, the night shifts going and the day shifts returning. The trams were grinding and clanging, full, and the drays and waggons and cars were packing the shop-embanked roads. There was greater noise and greater energy. This was the burst and the second wind, the top gear of the Big Smoke.

The kid dawdled around the corner, the loaf of bread under his arm. He passed the wine bar and heard the dynamo in there. Sometimes he thought of the doors flying open and a cloud of insects hurtling out thick as rain and still humming and skirling. At other times he imagined a bit of the surf trapped and washing in there; the same that you see on the beach at Clovelly and Coogee.

A dog welcomed a lamp-post, and the kid thought he would do that sometime, too, and see what it was like. One thing about dogs, they didn't have to wear pants. If dogs had pants he thought, how would they undo their buttons?

The girls from the chocolate factory, in green smocks and red caps, clattered past him, laughing and chattering. He started to cross the road, going around the head of a horse. He looked at the big, long head, and into the warm dark eyes like brown glass, and at the salivary rubber of the lips, and he saw the square flecks of chaff caught there, and he remembered that that was something else he had to try sometime: see what chaff tasted like.

The cracked road had oozed with a black gelatinous blood of pitch from the flame of the day, and he squiggled his big toe in the molten bleeding. Up on a balcony an elderly man leaned on his elbows, looking to be just top and arms, and peered down at the cavalcade. There were dogs like him that sat that way at kennel mouths.

The kid kicked at a heap of manure and sent it scattering in all directions, and climbed on to the kerb. The elderly man coughed and the kid looked up: "Good-day, Mister Draper."

The man didn't answer. The answer was in his eyes. The kid felt the slight, and he hated Draper, and wished he hadn't spoken. He wanted to get the words back and stick them wherever words belonged inside him and spit out others to tease or anger the man, or to say nothing.

He sauntered up past the school, and away over him and around him and beyond him as far as he could hear there was the familiarity of din and racket. A youthful printer, grimed with his trade, bolted past him to catch a tram, and his bolting was a smear of noise and a wind. A bottle-capper whistled loudly and it was like the warble of a bird. The traffic in slow converging rivers of movement stopped, shook impatience from themselves, and started. Suddenly a billy-cart screeched at his nerves, and he jerked around to see it, driven by a nine-year-old freak in goggles, tear past him and scorch the asphalt with the doubled and redoubled echo of falling skittles.

A loosely-wired drunk staggered along the kerb, telling the world why he didn't want to live: The world's in a mess, and it won't be long before the bloody Kaiser's right here in this town, and all the statues of Queen Victoria for miles around wearing spiked helmets.

The boy wondered at him curiously.

He got off the main thoroughfare and entered a lane. There was no diminution of the sound. There was only the sensation of having come from the midst of it on to the sidelines of it. This crash and boom and pace of a million units and a billion decibels was the slate of his brain and his life was written on it.

He came to the church and there he stopped, only momentarily, for he turned and went up the worn steps, hollowed like spoons. He merely diverted himself from the course of his path home with the easefulness of a river following the channel it had been scoring for centuries. He hadn't made any decision. The decision had been made weeks, months, before.

It wasn't strange. Unkajoe had always brought him as far as the church steps, and, with stern admonitions not to leave before Mass was over, had left him. And he had gone in. He always sat at the back of the church and looked at the people coming in and watched them slipping their coins into the poorbox. And when he slowly drifted out at the end of Mass, he watched then, too, the coins being put in, and he got to know the sound.

There was the empty sound of the echo of threepence on wood;

there was the clunk of the half-full mark; there was the brief, almost instantaneous peck of evidence when the box was full.

He knew all that. He'd thought about the box. He'd had it in his hands, spilling its treasures and loading his pockets till they bulged and pulled the waistline from under his belt with the weight. He had walked into shops and pointed to sweets and toys and cricket bats and footballs with the air of a millionaire ordering diamonds. He desperately wanted the things he coveted. He had bestowed fruits and drinks on the kids he knew and had found favour with them to the peak of his desire.

All that had been done except that it hadn't been achieved. All it wanted was the impulse, and this was the moment of impulse.

As he went through the Gothic door into the cool barrel of the church, he knew that it was the right time, the fall of evening, and he knew that he would be successful. He could feel it in the beat of his blood, the excited lilt of his heart, and the delight of the adventure in his quick mentations.

The church was empty. Nothing, to his mind, was ever so empty as an empty church. It wasn't empty because there were no people in it. That didn't make it empty. It had the look and the air of just emptiness. It was a building housing emptiness, as if emptiness were something concrete though intangible.

He knelt in the back pew and looked ahead over the uniform rows of thick, warm-brown, wooden seats, polished to show his fingers in their reflecting surface. There was a red light burning on a mount in the sanctuary. It wasn't a red lamp, he knew. It was a red, open glass globe with a candle sitting deep in its middle. But it looked like a red lamp. The flame bobbed in a tapering bud and fluttered like a golden moth caught there.

When his eye came to Christ being taken down from the cross, the thirteenth station, he looked at the red blood from the side wound, and he remembered the time he nicked his finger with a pocket knife to see if he bled red, too. He had expected to bleed black, and he was surprised and happy and yet mystified at the difference between himself and white children and yet the sameness there in the blood.

The highly-polished brass rails surmounting the marble fence that divided the sanctuary from the body of the church glowed dark yellow, and the point of a knob where a wayward ray ricochetted and struck it became a burst of dazzling cusps. High along the walls of the church the oblong windows of stained glass glowed with red and green, purple, jargoon and mazarine in the coloured raiment of the

saints depicted there. Through one window, towards the western altar of the Virgin Mary, the sun rays were diagonal blazes, vanes of differing intensities: nearer him they were golden poles leaning against the windows at the source of their being and at the end of space they broke on a pew and on the floor in a sprawl of golden ink.

The boy blessed himself, genuflected, and hurried over to the wall at the back of the church. He looked at the poorbox. It was frail. He looked all round him. Then he took out his penknife. He heard someone approaching, the weary scuff of broken shoes on the stone steps, and he walked quickly back to the pew.

A tired woman came in and walked tiredly and piously down the aisle, and knelt there in the middle with her head on one side.

"Damn woman," the boy said. "Hurry up, hurry up, hurry up, silly old woman."

He was still excited and the obstruction of this woman only added to the thrilled sensation. In a few minutes she went out and the boy hastened to the box. He stood there for a moment looking around him at the dimming rays and the brightening scarlet of the sanctuary lamp.

Then he heard a door slam. A priest in his cassock came out of the vestry, walked to the centre of the altar and genuflected, then turned; and the boy, for the first time feeling the nag of frustration, acted. He thought quickly, or rather he did not think at all. He followed the line of his ambition. He didn't scurry back to the pew or skip out the door. He darted quickly to the left, into the porch, and found himself on the dark steps of the stairs that twisted to the loft.

He stood there, and as the priest came down the aisle the boy noiselessly went higher, up around the bend of the stairs, and waited, big-eyed with guilty pleasure and expectancy.

He could hear the priest in the porch, and he heard the heavy stridulation of the closing door. He heard it jolt into place. He heard the rasp of the bolts and the grating turn of the key. He waited. He bumped down the stairs on his seat, slowly and cautiously, and watched the priest enter the sanctuary, genuflect, and disappear into the vestry. He heard the slam of the vestry door. He sat on the bottom step.

He was smiling.

In a few minutes he had opened the box with his penknife. He scraped with both hands, fisting out the money and cramming it into his pockets. Then he went to the door and dragged at the bolts. He got one free, and then the other, but the door, he confirmed, was locked.

He went down into the vestry and tried the door there. It, too, was locked.

He was still smiling, though a little unsurely.

He realised that this was his chance to see what the church looked like from the pulpit. He stood looking over the circular rail, and the darkling emptiness looked back. He walked up the aisle, peering at the windows with their sloping sills. They were too high to reach.

In the last pew at the back he sat down. He was working it out, and he decided to sit through the night there. It was easy. He was smart. He'd go to sleep in the organ loft and when the priest came in the morning to open the door he'd come down secretly and go off. And if someone saw him they would only think he was present at morning Mass.

That would do fine.

But wait a minute. What about the bread for tea, and Unkajoe? They'll start looking and they won't find me.

He screwed up his face and bit his finger and thought. He liked the spice of danger in his enterprise, the risk, even the sense of guilt. He knew which was the bigger end of the dilemma. And he decided that he wouldn't be worried about spending the night in the church.

He began to eat the soft inside out of the loaf.

To find out where he might sleep, he went up into the organ loft, leaned over the rail and looked down into the body of the church. He was surprised to see there the woolly grey darkness that welled up like a fog. It was as though the darkness started at the floor and worked up. The upper air was a lighter void. But the gloom was saturating that, too. The way he saw it, the light was leaving the church, flowing back the way it came, going out through the glass of the windows because that's where the last of it lingered and died.

Soon the creeping darkness had filled the whole church. There was a ghostly fugitive shine on the organ pipes, like an optical illusion. The boy peered all around him. Then he went down to try the door again. He went to the vestry door. He saw the surplices of the altar boys bulkily hanging on the walls like limp and headless beings. He didn't like the start it gave him, but he felt the cloth and said: "Silly old things."

Slowly, he walked into the transept, staring. Here, prisoner with him, was black space, and the black space filled with faint sounds, magnified by his blindness. It seemed to him a solid block of darkness with the red light beating in the sanctuary. He hoped it wouldn't go out. The darkness had no locality, and he felt he was lost, and

he wondered how big he was. He felt very little and helpless in the distortion of its immensity. He was walking about in a cave, the pitch-dark caves that Unkajoe talked about; then he was in a grave, a vast grave.

He sat down in one of the pews and looked with a beginning fear at the dark. It was so close to him it was in his mouth. Outside, afar, the city washed against the church in sound, but with the remoteness of bells in a dream and with the loneliness of the sea on midnight coasts.

It began to get cold. He curled his legs under his backside. He thought if he closed his eyes it wouldn't be so bad, because he would be as dark as the darkness. It was being open-eyed and only darkness to see that was bad.

He shut his eyes.

He saw the black panther with the green eyes at the bottom of the tree, and the man skulking in the branches, his face glistening with sweat; the beast swishing its tail and leaping with claws unsheathed and ripping streaks out of the tree trunk as it fell back to earth. And the man was Unkajoe. And he saw a figure that was himself running through the forest and coming upon the panther, wrestling with it over and over in a roll, thrusting its jaws away and then burying the knife in its throat, and the blood coming red on its pulsing breast.

The wind thrummed under the door. He jerked his eyes open, fright in his stomach. He peered all about him, and dense blackness held the secret of what it hid.

He got up and walked down towards the red light. He was afraid now; sober-faced. He felt the cold grip his ankles; the draught swim around his legs as though he was paddling in it.

There was a birling whistle high up in the wall, and it stopped him in his tracks. He peered into the darkness, losing his breath.

His eyes were big.

The whistle came intermittently, and, searching for the reason, he put it down to a crack in the window that caught the rising wind.

But he wanted to get out.

He went to the back of the church and again tried the door. He stared in fright. There was something behind him. It was hiding in the darkness. He craned his neck. There was nothing.

He placed his hand out and it touched the cold, lifeless foot of a statue. He moved off a few yards and looked back. The statue was following. He waited, then sneaked his hand out again, but it wasn't there. He swallowed the dry spit in his throat.

Down in the middle of the church there was a congress of currents, a slight wail set up by the clumsy romp of the draughts.

Terror started where fear left off.

God sees you. He heard the sister saying it. This is God's house, and he sees you no matter what you do. He sees you always.

The saints were talking. They were whispering. They had swords and spears and they were talking about how to deal with him. They would tie him to a post and light a fire under him. They would turn him into a pillar of salt. They were thinking it out. They were down in the middle there.

As he looked a saint came through the darkness with a dead-white face, the eyes glaring, and stood off a few yards, hating him, and then vanished. The boy felt himself being watched and he flung his head around and saw out of the tail of his eye a face blur in the darkness and disappear.

Then he thought of the devil. The devil was in this church.

And the boy hoarsely whispered, looking at the altar: "The devil told me to do it."

He went back to the poorbox and quickly pulled the coins out of his pockets and emptied them with a clang and a clatter into the box. And he waited to see if he felt better: and he couldn't hear the conspiracy of saints, he wasn't being watched, the devil was gone.

Then he heard the creak of a pew, the cry of timber, and he stood stockstill. He was looking down towards the sanctuary, listening. He heard footsteps. They were coming up the aisle on the left. Slowly and carefully. The boy found the aisle on the right, half ran along it and propped like a kangaroo and listened. The pew was creaking as though something, someone, was crossing from left to right. Then the footsteps came down the aisle he was in.

He was now driven to silence in the guardianship of his instincts, and he sneaked quickly around by the altar rails and went up the left aisle. When he heard the footsteps opposite him in the other aisle he pelted quickly as he could towards the back of the church, and, panting, looked down towards the sanctuary lamp. He saw the light black out and reappear as though something solid passed it.

He was crying without a sound, a whimpering grunting that he hushed as quickly as it rose.

Then he heard the sound coming up the aisle towards him, the slap of feet treading softly. He was near a statue and he stood hard against it, completely still. The feet came up, stopped. The boy heard the breathing a man makes sleeping with his mouth open. It was only a yard or so away from him. He bit on his hand. The scream choked,

suffocated by fear, in his throat. The footsteps passed on around the aisle again.

Now the boy began to shake with terror. He felt towards a pew and knelt, and started to whisper hoarsely: "I won't do it again. True, I won't do it again. The devil put me up to it, like sister says."

He went on praying. Then he broke off as he felt the vibration against his knees. Something was moving from the other end along the kneeler. The boy bolted into the aisle and almost ran. He stopped panting, a horrible mateship of tears and shocked breathing coming from him. Why couldn't this thing find him, if it was pure and holy? Why couldn't it go straight to him? It was blundering and groping like some terrible animal, relying on its sense of smell. It was a shaggy blind monster.

The boy waited for his ears to report to him again. But it was ten minutes before he heard anything. He knew the wind now, bumbling under the door, whistling high in the wall. He couldn't stir. He couldn't run wild. He knew he might collide with it. He had to wait until he knew where it was before he could retreat.

He knew where he had last left the thing was at the back of the church, and his eyes and all his hearing were trained in that direction. But the sound came from behind him. The slip-slap of feet, much fainter, more of a measured slither. He had not heard them pass him. It was as if they had left the floor and floated and been set down beyond him.

With a sob he stumbled the length of the aisle, and into the porch, and up the staircase leading to the loft.

He waited there with straining ears filled with the sounds of a seashell. Half an hour went by. He moved and stumbled and rushed into himself again. The darkness clothed the monster. He saw it three times, behind and above and before him, but it was a chimera.

Then he heard the slow-gaited footsteps ascending the stairs. He crouched down. He heard the new sound on the bare boards of the loft.

Everything in him roared into his mouth and came out in pealing screams.

Even so, with the dreadful noise in his own ears, he heard the sudden agitation of feet. A grip came on his shirt. And, still shrieking, he kicked out, clutched, and jerked away, and cried out for his mother, though he had had no mother for five years now, and hauled himself on to the balcony rail and fell with the scream changing and stopping dead.

The church was flooded with the radiance of one light after another snapping on, and the priest that came running into the sanctuary from the vestry with a white-faced stare ready to be pinned on the cause of that stare saw nothing, saw emptiness; but he hurried up the aisle, and his eyes fixed themselves with a start on the crumpled body of the boy behind the last pew with a mutilated loaf of bread beside him.



The Leper

I

The town has a high wall. Yes, it is a man speaking,
Only for himself—no other will hear him, believe in him.
Here, in the town, cantering month and month,
Spring to winter; outside? spring to winter.
Once, I begged and prayed with these months as they passed me:
Once. Seasons, I tell myself, have the nostril to curl
Adroitly, and the heavy blue eyelid of judgment.
But whether they go in costly and cunning garments
With a staff prolonged as evening among the olives
Bridging a stern daylight and a stern darkness,
With equerries facile, glib, devoted as the birds,
Or are pale and circumspect, long cold fingers:
There is always this question, this something, in its yellow
Rags which prefigure the almost living ulcer
Beneath them, whose words are the filthy vivid trickling
Never quite congealed by a halfpenny's smug bandage.
O a pennyworth of shade from you, tree, before your charity
Is leafless under nibbling frost!
O a purse-paring of sunlight, O even the silver facing
Of rain's tribute in autumn! Now have you not played your parts?
Look aside, look aside. Yet this non-human thought
Cannot furl its bewildering pennon, must utter itself,
I am the graceless utterance, the question, the thought.
God's mercy upon all, then: a church is assigned me,
Of Santa Maria Maddalena—so there are stones, eyes
To contain my grossness without the blink of ruin?

For Santa Maria there was mercy; for me only vengeance,
 An effigy sour as my body, and a scampering priest
 Whose discreet senses dare not linger upon me.
 Nor can I credit the Love aloft in those hands.

Acorn from oak—what a touching symptom of need.
 The town has a high wall. Where has it fallen, this husk,
 Small convulsed mouth pleading some harbourage?
 The wall, only the wall: I do not howl for spires,
 For the Rocca: only the whence, the height, the sureness,
 Neither within the town nor outside it!
 See, this high wall, tall oak, is mine by right—
 Stone quartered to brace a crumbling skin, to appease
 The festering ravenous gully—for an eye closed
 And desire gaping, the wall!

It is almost a man speaking.

II

Forgiven, forgiven.
 Forgiven by the road.
 Grey obdurate flint
 Under all lights; the goad
 Of sunstone and hailstone; glint
 Colder than the eyes, but nearer,
 Of mile, mile; and the driven
 Whittlings of day, day:

These would not gainsay
 A sudden wayfarer,
 Lamp in the spectrum's tent,
 Homing shades to the one mirror
 And white of embodiment.
 Given, the kiss of peace,
 Given, a white way,
 Love aloft in those hands.

Is there any wall withstands
 This one white embrace?
 The town falls open, I
 Know the whence, sureness, release,
 Bread to my pillory.

Forgiven by the road, forgiven
By a man and many lands.
I too have forgiven.

(From *The Canticle* Parts I and III)

FRANCIS WEBB

Death at Winsor Green

I

There is a green spell stolen from Birmingham;
Your peering omnibus overlook the fence,
Or the grey, bobbing lifelines of a tram.
Here, through the small hours, sings our innocence.
Joists, apathetic pillars plot this ward,
Tired timbers wheeze and settle into dust,
We labour, labour: for the treacherous lord
Of time, the dazed historic sunlight, must
Be wheeled in a seizure towards one gaping bed,
Quake like foam on the lip, or lie still as the dead.

2

Visitors' Day: the graven perpetual smile,
String-bags agape, and pity's laundered glove.
The last of the heathens shuffles down the aisle,
Dark glass to a beauty which we hate and love.
Our empires rouse against this ancient fear,
Longsufferings, anecdotes, levelled at our doom;
Mine-tracks of old allegiance, prying here,
Perplex the sick man raving in his room.
Outside, a shunting engine hales from bed
The reminiscent feast-day, long since dead.

3

Noon reddens, trader birds deal cannily
With Winsor Green, and the slouch-hatted sun
Gapes at windows netted in wire, and we
Like early kings with book and word cast down
Realities from our squared electric shore.

Two orderlies are whistling-in the Spring;
 Doors slam; and a man is dying at the core
 Of triumph won. As a tattered, powerful wing
 The screen bears out his face against the bed,
 Silver, derelict, rapt, and almost dead.

4

Evening gropes out of colour; yet we work
 To cleanse our shore from limpet histories;
 Traffic and factory-whistle turn berserk;
 Inviolate, faithful as a Saint he lies.
 Twilight itself breaks up, the venal ship,
 Upon the silver integrity of his face.
 No bread shall tempt that fine, tormented lip.
 Let shadow switch to light—he holds his place.
 Unmarked, unmoving, from the gaping bed
 Towards birth he labours, honour, almost dead.

5

The wiry cricket moiling at his loom
 Debates a themeless project with dour night,
 The sick man raves beside me in his room;
 I sleep as a child, rouse up as a child might.
 I cannot pray; that fine lip prays for me
 With every gasp of breath; his burden grows
 Heavier as all earth lightens, and all sea.
 Time crouches, watching, near his face of snows.
 He is all life, thrown on the gaping bed,
 Blind, silent, in a trance, and shortly, dead.

FRANCIS WEBB

Impromptu for Francis Webb

There is nothing here that they will understand.
The frost-bitten fingers write; the room grows tall
With dread or exultation at the hand
Designing in words its own topless wall.

They cannot understand. The madness creeps
As a stain creeps on the dissembling page,
And it is not their business. Nothing weeps
In them as the clinging soul consents to gauge

All possibilities of fear and rage.
Yet here in this room all things grow possible;
The soul speaks in its harsh natural language,
And the world shrinks to an involuted shell

Carrying your passion as rumour or complaint
Into the ear of death. We cannot cease
Visioning an age without barrier or taint,
The resurrected body in its peace

Walking its heaven; and have our first success
In most attempting the impossible,
When through the heavy guard upon our flesh
The personal word must speak or sing for all;

The world that terrifies you must be seen
Striving within its mesh of dark and light
Till everything, scarlet wink of water, green
Cap of the spice-bush, bless the ennobled sight.

.

Now I am at my trade of prophecy,
Old friend, I balance every burning word
With courteous intent, as it should be,
In case my anger be too much preferred

Before my love; in case our dream of flesh
Decline to the rotting dust of eyes and hair
Without my voice's witness, and the leash
That reasoned anguish holds upon despair.

How can we love what has been always there,
 Person or thing growing and straightening
 About its own clear grain? How praise the air,
 Invoking the element that invokes their being?

Rhyme must serve, and the twisted heart limp after,
 Unwinding its own and everything's long coil.
 Peace, as we've learnt, is slow; and each burnt rafter,
 Each spilling of blood, urges more dreadful toil

On those who assume the burden of their time.
 These strangers come, in arrogance or fright
 Denying all; and see through a haze of crime
 Our world heavy with water and slow light.

• • • • •

This is our world, this is our only world,
 Which lives and breathes, and will be glorified;
 Displaying, as a woman, naked but not wild,
 The silvering shadows of her rounded side.

Has any man, poet or fool or saint,
 In leaving her not started and cried out
 Till his very bones re-echoed the complaint;
 "No, I'll not leave . . . not leave . . ." and broken his heart?

No word may utter her, no tongue bespeak
 Anything save its own despair of breath;
 And every poem or cry of ours must seek
 The darkest good-byes of our living death.

What frightens us in words or careless dust?
 Not dying—but that snake which lies among
 The bush of poetry with its open lust,
 And touches everything with his smooth tongue.

For art, like the world, is innocent and blind,
 Open to him who lays even on prayer
 His slime of vanity; and its shapes remind
 The tempter of his vast destructive care.

• • • • •

The desperate hand writes faster. The joints ally
Themselves with suffering. The night air grows pale.
All images of envious nature try
Their powers on your room, and will not fail.

Then, if self-refuge rises high and tense,
Old friend, be careful: Words would become our home
And cosset us, till one dark day we find them
Dwindled to ash, or rigid as a tomb.

Our task is this: To keep them swept and sure,
An open courtyard where the poor may find,
Always, the walking Love, Who does not rest
In hearts which fear and hatred have defined.

They are more than refuge for our cowardice;
For hints of an action are established there
In image and in gesture, whence we may
Call out that Love upon the tideless air.

Each poem, too, is solar to this world
Of man and time, and will be raging soon.
Even if the heart die, some few will see it
At midnight flaring like the pitch of noon:

Target of light, to which our faith accords!
While there our selves are drawn and trampled. All
Images harden to flesh, and all our words
Are strange to speak, and stranger to remember
As we grow nearer them. And the light grows tall
In the flame without smoke, and the day without number.

VINCENT BUCKLEY

Judith Wright

The Red Satin Eiderdown

IN late autumn and in the still clear days of early winter, the mullet begin to come in, and after them the other fish, each in their season. Shoal after shoal, day after day, they press on up the river and into the chain of lakes; it is spawning time. Down at the river-mouth the nets are out for them, and the fishermen work day and night; again and again the nets are filled, but however many are caught, more slip through. They come up-river with the tides, past the ranks of sombre mangroves and the white paper-bark swamps, into the lakes; looking down from the fishing-boats, you can see their advance in thrusting silver half-circles, like the lines of foam rounding on a beach at the surf's edge. They act as the sea does, driving on up the lakes higher and higher until they reach their upper limit, and the last shallow wave of them thins out and loses itself where the tide-water no longer salts the lake.

Then Banarah, the desultory settlement of a few houses at the lake-edge, loses its laziness and is alight with activity. The Risdon boys come back from their seasonal work of shearing or cane-cutting, and mend their boats and nets; the little sawmill on which Banarah depends for the rest of the year is left deserted. Along the ragged paper-bark jetty and the white sandy beach the nets hang drying on their frames while the fish are packed, then are gathered up and thrown back into the boats that set off, as soon as the cases are full, to bring in more. The Risdons, the Marshalls, Jack Dockett and old Ben have no time to shave, scarcely time to sleep; so that at the end of the season their eyes stare over their hollow cheeks and their beards are inches long.

When the fish are in, you would think Banarah's people full of a vivid, irritable energy. The women's faces are sharp and urgent, their hands are pink and raw from packing the cases of fish and ice, their voices have an eager scolding note. The few children, coming home in the empty fish-truck from the school, eight miles away, are driven into the work or set to mend nets and tie floats. Even at

night, when the lake's evening colours have faded into luminous black, and the one street-light sways with the paper-bark it hangs from, lighting a moving circle of sandy road in front of the post-office store, the women are restless. They peer out at the lights far off over the lake, where the boats are anchored off the banks, or pad in their sandshoes or bare feet along the white road and talk low-toned, not to wake the children, over their sagging unpainted picket-fences. Soon the boats will be in again, the men must change their wet clothes and snatch what sleep they can, the fish must be unloaded and packed, the nets attended to. Banarah's atmosphere is eager and fretful as the dry, cool weather.

But summer is lazy, lonely, steam-heated and ridden with sandflies and mosquitoes. Most of the men have gone again; except for old Ben, who has the pension now and needn't go shearing or cane-cutting any more, and Jack Dockett, who stays to look after the boats and makes a meagre summer living out of a few rickety flats and cabins at the lake-edge. The mill has work for only three or four men; sometimes it has no work at all. Mrs. Risdon hides in her big verandaed house on its high stilts behind the bamboos and the frangipani; the Helmers at the store try to make the money last as long as they can, for their takings have fallen below their meagre living; the few summer visitors row inexpertly along the lake-shore and their children scream in the warm shallow water.

There is only one house at Banarah that is not changed by the round of the seasons. It stands across the other side of the headland, half a mile from the settlement, close by the long beach that curves round and vanishes into a shallow of mud and mangroves not far off. Its slabs are scaling and whitened, the yellow cat's-claw vine that scrambles over it holds it, probably, from falling. Near by is the wreck of an old jetty, and any day you can see, creeping along its sagging timbers with the sinewy caution of a ragged black cat, Kate Anderson, the woman whom Banarah knows as the Widow.

There she stoops and rises, lowering her crab-pots or lifting them out and casually dropping the big blue mud-crabs into an old creel. Her blue dungarees are threadbare with age, and her feet, brown and cracked with the salt water, have forgotten the feel of shoes. It is ten years since the Widow was last in a town; her head is turned, Banarah tells you. Ah, the poor thing! It was in the big cyclone she lost him.

You wouldn't think the lake could be dangerous, to look at it now; it lies like a long stretched web of blue silk, catching the shadow of the high hills on the other side, reflecting the pale trunks and dark leaves of the mangroves so gently; the fishermen tell you

it goes no deeper than ten feet anywhere in the six miles' length of it. But that's where the danger comes in. Whipped up by those big winds—eighty miles an hour and more, they come, with the rain like gravel thrown at you—the waves rear up so high that the lake-bottom shows white in between them; a boat caught wrong way on can break her back on the sand as easy as that; and that was what happened to Roly Anderson, at the beginning of the fishing season, and the boy with him.

It was hard on Kate, you may depend on it, but she never showed it; no, Mrs. Dockett said, she never let a tear fall. She's never mentioned his name, since, nor the boy's. Only sometimes, particularly in the evenings, or when the wind gets up in the rainy season, and the lake—instead of letting its little waves fall on the rocks and the sand like lips nibbling and kissing, with a soft hiss that rises sometimes to a smack and a splash—begins to roar quietly into the beach like the sound of the wind itself rising, the Widow gets a restless fit.

Down she comes, then, to see Mrs. Dockett; long and thin and bony, grey as an eel, she stands at Mrs. Dockett's door, and the summer visitors in the flats (if there are any left now that the weather's turned) cluster stealthily at their windows to watch. She waves her arms at Mrs. Dockett. "Thief!" she screams. "Why don't you make him give it back? I know he's got it; he's making money out of it hand over fist, day after day out there with it. It's *my* boat, I tell you. Jack Dockett's a thief and always was."

Poor Mrs. Dockett can only shake her head. "She never mentions him, nor the boy. Just this she's got in her poor head: once she had a boat and now it's gone. Sometimes she thinks the Risdons stole it, sometimes it's old Ben. Poor Kate; and she won't let any of us inside her door. Screams at us; orders us off the place. Calls us a pack of thieves. She leaves her crabs at the gate there; Jack picks them up; I buy her bread for her, meat, any little thing I reckon she might eat—she don't eat much; we put it there when we take her crabs away. That's how she lives. Yes, we're real sorry for her; but what can we do? You see, she's scarcely fit to talk to, is she now?"

The summer visitors shake their heads; she isn't. As for Mrs. Dockett, the smallest child of them all knows her. A kinder soul you wouldn't want, though when the fish are coming in she does sometimes put the rough edge of her tongue on Jack, just to keep him up to it. They know, too, that those crabs can't fetch much; not enough to keep the Widow alive, however little she might eat. Mrs. Dockett's grocery bill is just that much heavier, when the crab-pots are light on.

Poor Mrs. Dockett is sentimental; watching the Widow as she strides along the beach, her sudden gestures, her clenched fists and drooping head, Mrs. Dockett's eyes are full of tears. But the rest of Banarah gives her no more than a passing glance. Ought to be put away somewhere; she'll do someone in one day, I shouldn't wonder.

Only one thing the Widow had in the house that she valued, Mrs. Dockett sometimes told the summer visitors. Just before the big cyclone, Roly Anderson went to town with a load of fish—it was before the Board, that was; he sold them a good price, better than he expected, being early in the season, and he bought her a present. It was a red satin eiderdown, and not a suitable thing for the climate at all, but he'd taken a fancy to it, and there it was. She showed it all round the township; it was a real pretty thing, had birds on it worked in silks, and flowers and that. Well, it was that very week he was killed; they found him in the mangroves over the other side, and half of the boat, and the boy not far off. It was the first present he'd given her since she was married. And there it is still, because I saw it, one time I went in; she'd turned her ankle and we wondered what was wrong, finding no crabs for two days. There it was, as clean and nice as when she got it. Look at my pretty eiderdown, she says to me, just like when she showed it to me first. But the rest of the house—well, you wouldn't keep a dog in it. Funny—isn't it?

Banarah never grows; few people come, the children when they grow up don't settle there but go somewhere else, for there isn't enough fishing to keep more than five or six families, even in the season, and the roads are not good enough for tourists. So the changes, when they come, are made either by time or by the weather. When the cyclone came last year, the township was so shaken up that now you'd hardly know it for the same place.

To begin with, the trees went. Those lovely paper-barks on the white beaches, where the lake came up in its six-inch tide right to their feet, so that on a calm day they stood there double, every leaf reflected and their white ragged trunks moving up and down on the wavelets (you should have seen the sunset reflected through them in the lake)—all of them went. One smashed in the roof of the store, and made a mess of the house too. The Helmers had to rebuild it; luckily they came into a bit of money just then, and they've put up quite a nice little fibro shop there now. The jetties went; they lie in a tangle on the beach. The water came up so high it killed old Ben's pineapple plantation and washed away two of Dockett's cabins. As for the roads—it was days and days before the first truck got through with bread and mail. Banarah was lost, quite lost, for a week; it might

as well not have been there at all, it was a piece cut off from the world; and as Mrs. Helmer said, "If the Lord had chosen to end it all we never would have known."

"My goodness, Mrs. Dockett," said the summer visitors, looking at all that had happened to Banarah since they were last there. "What a time you must have had!"

"Ah," said Mrs. Dockett, "it was poor Jack that had the worst of it. The only man, he was, in Banarah at the time, unless you count old Ben; all those boats to look after, and you can see we've lost four out of the dozen and three stove in that badly they'll take months to mend if ever they're worth it. And then rescuing the Widow . . ."

When a cyclone begins—after the calm and steaming heat is over—there springs up a wicked little intermittent wind. The trees become restless; you can feel their terror. Then it increases; the rain begins, small and hard, the cloud tears over thicker and thicker, duller and duller. The houses and trees begin to groan; somewhere a rattle begins, and you have an uneasy feeling that it's the roof beginning to strip. The pressure gets worse, until you hear the first crack, see the first branch travel overhead. . . .

As for poor Jack Dockett, he began by dragging all the boats up the beach above high tide-level, and that was no light job either for a man with this and that wrong with him, like Jack Dockett has. But he soon saw that wouldn't be enough, and out he went again, wearing nothing but shorts and his long boots, for it wasn't possible to keep dry in any case, and dragged them farther yet, and then farther till they were right up on the road and tied to the front fences; and there, he said, they'll have to take their chance because there's work to be done on the house now. So he dragged stones up on to the roof of the flats and tied ropes across, in the dark, because the lights had gone long since and a hurricane lantern drowned as soon as you took it outside. Then he went along the road to Helmer's place, because Helmer was away and Mrs. Helmer was well-known to be nervous in a wind.

By this time the waves were reaching the road and the spray blowing off them would cut you like a knife; and as he reached Helmer's down came that big paper-bark and nearly cut the place in two. Nothing to do but get Mrs. Helmer out and down to the flats. There was old Ben, farther down the road, busy building a kind of breakwater to keep the lake out of his pineapples; a lot of good that was, but he kept on at it all night and he was no use to Jack at all. The boats were nearly afloat again, and he pulled them right up and

lashed them sideways to the fences so they wouldn't bash them down as the waves lifted them.

Inside, Mrs. Dockett and Mrs. Helmer tried to make a cup of tea; only the wind blew spray and rain down the flue and put the fire out as they lighted it. Look at the cabins, Jack, said Mrs. Dockett; for God's sake look at the cabins. You could see in the bit of light from the window that one of them was lifting up and down like the boats; and as Jack ran down to it it crumpled up like so much brown paper; well, it was only made of that cheap plywood, but it was a loss just the same. The water was reaching up under the others, but you can't drag a cabin up a hill, like you can a boat; so he just gave them a look and started off for Risdon's to see how the house was standing up to it, and old Mrs. Risdon too.

It was while he was up there that the worst of it began. The wind sounded as though the whole world was letting loose one long yell; trees cracked like gunfire, the lake stood up on end and pranced like a team of wild horses. Jack left Mrs. Risdon in her kitchen to face it out (she had a bottle of brandy there, so he reckoned she wasn't as bad off as some, and she was getting into it steady when he left) and back he ran by the top road, because the beach road wasn't there any more. Then he thought of the Widow, round on the other beach where the wind was coming from, and he made his way there by some means or other across the fallen trees—with more falling as he went, mind you.

There was water everywhere, and at first he thought the Widow's house had gone out into the lake altogether. Then he made out there was still a bit of the roof left, but that was flapping in the wind and at any minute it might sail off on a gust and cut him in halves. So he ran for it, wading through lashing lake-water nearly thigh-deep over the rocks, till he reached what was left of the house. There sat the Widow in the dark—so he made out when he called her—on her bed, with just the two walls left of her house and the roof about to fall; in or out, depending on the wind at the time.

He gave her a call to come out, but she wouldn't, so he ran inside and there she was. Well, he isn't a strong man, Jack, and his boots were that full of water it was all he could do to get about, himself, but somehow or other he got the Widow out of that old death-trap of a house and dragged her up the headland and over to the other beach, she fighting and screaming at him all the time. I don't know how he did it in the dark, with the trees across the way and the water pouring among the rocks like so many waterfalls and the wind blowing them on to their knees as they struggled together, but he

did, said Mrs. Dockett, and never did I see a face like his when he dragged her in. I tell you, he was near done for.

"And she was all right?" asked the visitors, looking at the headland where there was now no roof showing where the Widow's roof had showed, but only a battered green army tent pitched all awry.

Mrs. Dockett sighed. "She don't seem much the worse; not so much the worse as Jack is, anyway; strained his heart, the doctor says. How he'll get on with the nets this season I don't know. But there, poor thing, I think she feels it. Do you know what she was shouting at him, all the while he dragged her along? "Red satin eiderdown," she was saying, "let me go, I want my red satin eiderdown"; and she was fighting like a cat to go back and get it, though the rest of the house went just after they'd left it and God knows what happened to that eiderdown; we've never found track nor trace of it."

Jack Dockett, sitting in the yard mending nets, did not provide much foothold for hero-worship to the summer visitors, being bald and rather peevish and inclined to make much of his strained heart. But they could not help being impressed, as they prowled through the wreckage of Banarah and inspected the stove-in boats. For all that, things were coming back to normal; even the tree-stumps were sprouting, where the trees had not blown down irrecoverably.

There lay the lake, calm and blue as a waterlily; still evening came down and the creamy full moon wafted down like a balloon up from the mangroves on the other side. All was peaceful, greyed with gentle colour.

Down the road from the headland the Widow came stalking, bare-footed and wild-haired. They looked at her with fearful interest. Outside Jack Dockett's yard she stopped and shouted, "Why don't you give it back? Thief, I know you've got it. You've hidden it in a cupboard. Give me back my red satin eiderdown!"

"See," Mrs. Dockett said, "she's forgotten all about the boat; now it's nothing but that eiderdown. Never a word about Roly or the boat. Poor Kate; poor thing."

"Ah, the silly old coot," said Jack Dockett.

H. H. Wilson

The Skedule

HEAD down, like a charging buffalo, the Royal Mail bus was hurtling along the bitumen highway which led north from Alice Springs to Darwin. Three days was fair enough to cover the nine hundred-odd miles, agreed Her Majesty's Government and Big Joe Hewitt, the mail contractor. So three days it was, come high heat of summer or the drenching deluges of the Wet. Prospectors and station folk alike could set their watches by the Royal Mail.

"No records, mind you," Big Joe would reassure his passengers, and cross his enormous forearms across a chest which did them no shame. "But I like to keep to skedule."

His pronunciation of this word was a legacy from the war years, when Americans had helped to build this road. It was known to impress dilatory passengers more than the softer sounding "schedule". A skedule could not be trifled with. A schedule might be. A skedule spoke of a relentless, shining efficiency. No dawdlings in bed, when a 7 o'clock breakfast was the rule; no quarrelling for the last pint of tepid water from the kerosene-tin showers; no gossiping over morning or afternoon tea in the little bough shelters at the stopping places.

"Fifteen minutes," Big Joe would announce as they pulled up. And at fifteen minutes sharp the horn of the Royal Mail would sound peremptorily. Five minutes later its double tyres would scrunch the gravel on the edge of the road, and woe betide any who dallied. They were forced to scamper ludicrously along beside the slowly moving Leviathan, under a barrage of hostile or derisive stares from the more docile passengers. They became known as "some people" and a brand was upon their brows. "Some people", it appeared, did not mind how they inconvenienced their fellows or claimed extra privileges, or thought the Royal Mail was a luxury tourist coach; or, worst crime of all, threatened the sacred skedule by their selfishness.

Big Joe looked into his rear-vision mirror, his eyes squinting a little and a delta of lines crinkling out from the corners. It was not unnatural perhaps that Mrs. Healey, wife of a V.I.P., should head the

list of these unwelcome travellers. She had not wanted to travel on the Royal Mail, but the planes had been booked out. And the reluctance had been mutual. So there she was, sitting up straight, all be-goggled and hooded like a space-ship passenger, her frosted face registering her displeasure as the Woodley youngsters charged past her down the aisle. Icicle wasn't a bad name for her, Big Joe decided privately, glancing at his watch. Jove, nearly due at the Attack Creek turn-off where he dropped the kids, home for their first term holidays.

Yes, there it was, near the old army sign which warned against too much speed on this straight stretch. "Steady! Rubber grows on trees—temporarily Tojo's."

And there was the truck waiting, drawn up in the shade of a cork-tree. Mum and Dad and little sister in the front, trying to preserve a dignified restraint in their joy at this home-coming. On the back were a full-blooded stockman and his three small children, all spotlessly attired in bright blue denim, and all waving and shrieking with delight.

So he gave three triumphant hoots on the big horn and slowed down. Young Tom Woodley, hanging on the step, spun out before the vehicle lumbered to a stop, and the gesticulating little group flowed over him. Angela followed more sedately, long black-stockinged legs and neat uniform looking a little prim in this vast sea of plains. Then her mother detached herself from young Tom and with a whoop the little girl dropped her battered school case and her dignity and ran towards her. Big Joe followed more leisurely, with the bag of mail. Greetings all round, a little Road gossip, and the big bus moved off. The shabby station truck started up its engine in challenge. The happy group on the back shouted, laughed, cracked toy stock-whips. Some of the passengers waved back, losing for the moment that feeling of superiority which long-distance travellers feel for short-distance ones, in a kind of wistful envy.

As he pressed the accelerator, Big Joe turned to his mirror again. Yes, he thought so. Grandma was having another attempt to unload her family history, this time on the Icicle. He knew her technique. The little family brochure, open in the middle to show two uniformed soldiers, one sporting a walrus and one a toothbrush moustache.

"Me husband and me son," the old lady would be saying in the firm voice of one confident that her private affairs are of absorbing interest to strangers. "One in the last war, one in this . . ." And, if the listener did not thaw, she would add lugubriously: "Dead—both of 'em."

Big Joe studied her sympathetically. Poor old soul. Game, too. Travelling alone the three thousand miles from Melbourne to see her remaining son at Darwin, and not too sure of her welcome from a new daughter-in-law. And doing it the hard way. The only complaint she had made was a fear expressed without fail at every stop, lest her hat-box be crushed in the pile of luggage.

"It's me new hat, with the pink rose," she would apologise. "I want to look nice when I arrive . . . for my daughter-in-law."

Yes, it was hard to be old and lonely . . . and afraid. He saw with a mixed relief, that she had turned to the two women just in front. Well, she'd find a more receptive audience there, but in return would have to listen to another and very different family saga. He knew that mother and daughter, both on the domestic staff at the Alice Springs Hospital, were going north to similar positions at Katherine. "I was quite happy at the Alice," the mother had confided in him already. "It's Emmie, y'see. Another undesirable suitor. . . ."

He had nodded reassuringly. He knew all about Emmie. Most men on the Road did. The mother had a hopeless task, he decided. But she was game all right.

Most of 'em were game. Take that middle-aged couple with the six strapping kids, all under fifteen. At least five of 'em were strapping. The middle one, a scraggy little girl of eight, was weak-eyed and muling like the kitten in the litter one inevitably drowns. This one had been spared somehow. Pity. The father was a little fellow. Had his home and business blown sky-high by the Japs and they were all going back to start life over again. No more cities for them.

Or young Mrs. Percer, with the white-faced new baby and the little boy of two, going to rejoin her husband at Pine Creek. Devil of a trip for two small kiddies just out of hospital.

Quite different from those two young limbs of Satan, whose mother was taking them to join their father in the air force at Darwin. It would be the happiest moment of her life when she could turn them over to him. Still, no harm in them. Just full of the joy of living and a boy wouldn't be a boy if he didn't have a bit of the devil in him. He looked back into his mirror with a fatherly tolerance. Then stiffened. The younger boy, aged five, was bouncing up and down on the seat as he'd been doing for the last two hours without a break. The seven-year-old was quietly and methodically unpicking the upholstery with a penknife he had smuggled in.

Big Joe's terrible voice bellowed into the loud-speaker.

"If those two boys don't stop ruining the seats, I'll stop the bus and chuck 'em out."

There was a long moment's petrified silence. The five-year-old bouncer seemed suspended in the air, before he sank slowly down into his seat, skewered by dozens of pairs of accusing eyes. He burrowed farther and farther down until only a wild tuft of hair was visible. The seven-year-old destroyer merely paused in his work and looked up with an angelic smile of innocence, sure that such a threat could not apply to him. Through the gap in his front teeth his pink tongue poked questioningly. But his tormented mother, roused from her midday torpor, woke to sudden fury, snatched the knife from him and threw it out the window.

Big Joe laughed silently. Wonder what the young devil will be up to next? The diversion had given the passengers a topic of common interest. They straightened up from their hunched positions, grinned or frowned at the child as became their varying dispositions, began swapping stories of their own kids or their own childhood.

All but the young girl sitting alone on one of the two seats near the front. Bit of a mystery girl, he thought, frowning, for he didn't like mysteries on his bus. Getting off at Hayes' Creek. He watched her covertly amid the mild upheaval caused by his announcement.

He had noticed her when she first got on, because she wore her dark hair braided round her head, not cut short like the rest. About twenty-three or -four, he judged. Pale city face, slightly spotted now with a heat rash, and big dark eyes which, once when he caught them in his rear-vision mirror, were clouded with something which looked mighty like fear. Probably worked in some city office, he mused. Went to work each day on an electric train, nibbled celery and cheese sandwiches at lunch-time, saw a new movie each Friday night with the current boy-friend. What was she doing up here then, getting off at Hayes' Creek which wandered through the outermost reaches of the Never-Never?

He had looked at her left hand as she had taken off her blue cotton gloves soon after the bus had started, when the hot inland air had begun to force its way into the bus like a belated passenger. But there was no ring. What then? Governess to some outback station? Well, it was none of his business. Only there were no stations he knew of around Hayes' Creek. Only a lot of brand-new banana plantations, far from the stage of development when they could contemplate such luxuries as governesses.

She was sitting staring out the window, but he guessed she was not seeing much. She was too occupied with her own thoughts. And she was scared, too. Almost to the point of panic.

Then it was lunch-time, and he stopped with relief at the isolated

shack and store at Fraser's. Here lunch was to be had in a bough shed, allegedly for coolness, but in effect only giving an advance signal to myriads of flies which now rushed from their ambush and set upon the distracted passengers.

Mrs. Healey eyed the limp spinach leaf, slice of tomato and a piece of meat which might have come from the work-hardened shoulder of ox, sheep, goat or even buffalo, with almost equal distaste.

"This is simply disgraceful," she protested pushing back her plate. "Not even natives should be expected to eat such stuff . . ."

She rose and left the table in a huff. Two or three others followed suit, going surreptitiously to their bags for biscuits or fruit. The rest ate on stolidly, some even asking for a return of the glutinous yellow substance light-heartedly masquerading under the title of "Orange Delight".

Big Joe blew his horn a second more promptly than usual. No use giving them time to get together and grouse, he thought. Get 'em going and they'll forget about the lunch. I know it's pretty awful, but it's hard enough to get anyone to take on the job up here.

Ah, two more passengers. And one well under the weather. Not the kind he cared to take. For a moment he was tempted to tell them to hitchhike a lift on the next truck. They were only going as far as Katherine. Then he looked more closely at the moderately sober one. Thought he remembered the face. Yes. Slag Slater himself. If he'd recognised him before he'd taken the money he wouldn't have let him on. Didn't want any trouble and once that mother set eyes on him . . .

The two men lumbered down the aisle and lurched into the back seats, one on each side. Big Joe noted that Slag arranged his companion comfortably in the corner, propped him up with a suit-case, and left him muttering away to himself in the corner like a radio someone has forgotten to turn off. Then he turned his attention to the passengers.

"Don't you look, Emmie," hissed her mother, taking her arm firmly. "It's that dreadful man . . . drunk as a . . ."

"Don't tell me what to do," returned her daughter promptly. "I'm over twenty-one and I guess it's a free country, isn't it?"

"Emmie, don't you dare go . . ." The worried mother wavered between command and entreaty. "I tell you he's no good, Emmie. No good."

"Emmie." The Slag settled himself comfortably in the empty back seat and patted the place beside him invitingly. "Emmie."

With a final wrench which sent her mother spinning back against the window, Emmie got up and went to him. Big Joe could see her

cuddling close against Slag's arm as it lay negligently along the back of the seat. He put another fruit drop in his mouth. From the mirror, he could see the mother was sobbing, hunched up under her bleached, old-fashioned country hat. Grandma was consoling her gently.

Big Joe shrugged at himself in the mirror. Well, only two hours to Flinders' Waters and he was right on skedule. Just then, with a report like a field gun, the back tyre blew out. That means quarter of an hour at least. He cursed softly as he climbed down from his cabin, after making a brief explanation through the loud-speaker. But what with the heat and a recalcitrant tyre, it turned out to be just over half an hour. Well, he told himself, easy to make that up. Blokes at the telegraph station will chiak me for running late. But I can take it. We'll be at Katherine as usual. Cut out afternoon tea if necessary.

But the outcry was too much. No, they must stop for afternoon tea. How do you expect us to continue to endure this heat and dust without a cup of tea? Besides, Mrs. Percer's baby looks very crook. Let it cool off for half an hour inside the station's creeper-shaded veranda. Sponge it down, give the mite a fresh lease of life.

Then the Bouncer strayed off and could not be found. Another ten minutes of yelling and shouting. Big Joe's lips set grimly. An hour behind now. If that kid were his, he'd skin the hide off him, the young devil. Ah, there he was. Clinging grimly to some rusty parts of a jeep which he had found derelict in the scrub by the side of the road.

"Let him take them with him," he ordered the flustered mother. "Better destroying that old junk than my upholstery."

On their way again at last. Big Joe was crouching a little now over the immense wheel, like a jockey riding his steed up the straight. No stops now until Katherine, come high wind and water. But, yes, there was one stop. The girl for Hayes' Creek. He glanced back at her. She was sitting upright now, a faint colour in her cheeks that was not due to the heat. Her hair was freshly done and she was wearing a fresh yellow blouse the colour of evening sunlight. Why, she looked almost pretty now. He considered her young face judicially and as he did so, there was an apologetic knock on his cabin.

"Sorry to interrupt you," the father of the six children apologised, "but the girl getting off at Hayes' Creek . . ."

"What about her?" snapped Big Joe, not glancing up.

"She's getting married tonight. Told my missus at the last stop. People were dead against it, so she's come up on her own. We thought we'd take up a collection . . . give her a bit of a presentation when

you stop at Hayes' Creek. It won't take more than a minute or two," he added in a placatory voice.

"I'm an hour late now," Big Joe warned him. "It had better be a pretty quick presentation...."

"Oh, it will be," the man assured him, taking the note which Big Joe passed him. "Oh, thank you . . . we thought only a token . . ."

"Anyone starting life at Hayes' Creek needs more than a small token." Big Joe bit off the words and crouched lower over his steering wheel. "Life's pretty tough out there . . . it's still Never-Never country."

"Her husband-to-be is meeting her at the turn-off," the man continued, steadying himself against the swaying motion of the bus. "The Inland Mission clergyman is due there tonight. . . ."

Big Joe made no comment, concentrating on a difficult bend. The man still lingered. "She hasn't seen him for over three years . . . he went on ahead to build up the banana plantation a little."

"Beats me why city girls come up north," Big Joe growled. "They don't realise what they're letting themselves in for."

"He's meeting her at the turn-off." The man slipped the note in the hat he was carrying in his hand and made his way back into the bus.

Now that the news was out, the whole bus was humming with excitement. Dark looks were cast at the Icicle who had been inclined to protest when the hat went round, but who, nevertheless, had contributed handsomely. Grandma was explaining to anyone who would listen that she must get up to the luggage van for her hat-box. The pink rose on her hat was brand-new. A bride must have a flower, even an artificial one.

The drunk had stopped his interminable crooning and turned out his pockets. The Slag and Emmie too had stopped their very different crooning and Slag had given generously of Emmie's last week's pay. Mrs. Percer shushed her puling infant and stared compassionately at the girl. Hope she'll have better luck than I had, she reflected without bitterness. Wouldn't be so bad if Ted didn't drink and climate didn't get the kids down. . . . She can have that new tin of talc powder they gave me at the hospital. . . . Ted only sent me the bare fare back.

The Bouncer and the Destroyer heightened the atmosphere of growing excitement by counting the mile posts.

"Only 418 more miles to Darwin, Mum? How many to Pine Creek?"

"Hayes' Creek, not Pine Creek, darling . . ."

"But why isn't it Pine Creek, Mum?"

"Because the plantation is at Hayes' Creek."

"But why, Mum, why . . .?"

"Count the posts, darling. Look, there's 417. Only seven more to Hayes' Creek."

Only six more. Two more. One more.

Everyone was peering out his nearest window. The drunk was pushed aside by someone who had only an aisle seat, and unceremoniously knelt upon.

"Bet you I see him first . . ."

The bride sat stiff and embarrassed on her front seat, a shabby suit-case gripped in both hands, a piece of pale blue ribbon trailing from it, forgotten in her haste.

The bus began to slow down. There's the turn-off. Hayes' Creek turn-off. Can't see anything but a signpost. And no one there.

In a silence which was almost accusing, Big Joe climbed stiffly down from his cabin. He cast a swift look around. No one. Surely the fellow had enough decency to be on time to meet a bride who'd come three thousand miles? Well, he'd wait ten minutes for them to make the presentation. Not a second longer. Even so, he'd be an hour late at Katherine. Might make up a quarter. But no more. Hilly country was beginning and there were a few skeletons of army trucks lying at the bottom of ravines to remind one not to take the bends too quickly.

Eager hands to help her down and take the suit-case and the lumpish paper parcel from her quivering hands. Little jokes to make it easier for the bride when the bridegroom tarries.

"He's takin' extra time doin' himself up . . . special occasion, y'know."

"Bet he's grown a beard . . . most fellers do in these parts."

"Is he dark or fair? Or maybe red . . . those red beards always get the girls in."

Then a little silence. Everybody tried not to scan the silent countryside. Away to the left where the Hayes' Creek track ran, the country rose gently, first into foothills in which were discernible the fresh green squares of plantations, and then into the towering bulk of a black mountain watching guard over them.

Big Joe spoke.

"The folk on this trip want to make a little expression of their good wishes to you," he told the girl who was making valiant efforts to appear unconcerned. "But seeing that we only knew about the wedding at the last stop, it didn't give us much time to drop into the nearest store . . ."

There was a friendly rustle of laughter as the passengers crowded nearer and the girl blushed red and white by turns, completely taken by surprise. Whilst Mr. Mellows made his brief speech, one of his older daughters ran to the side of the road and gathered a little bunch of wild cotton flowers. The girl kept her eyes on the ground until he was finished, and the hand she put out to take the little purse was trembling a little.

"I can't thank you enough . . ." she faced them all bravely. "I thought I'd have no one of my own folk here on my wedding day . . . and now I have over forty." There was a little silence. "Please don't wait," she went on quickly, "I know you're running late now." The appeal was addressed to Big Joe personally. "Tim will be here any minute now. And thank you all, so very much."

"A few minutes more won't matter," Big Joe was surprised to find himself saying casually as though he had a few hours up his sleeve. "I don't fancy leaving a bit of a girl here by herself. It's seven miles back to the settlement at Hayes' Creek, and when night comes on up here, it comes pretty sudden."

"Oh, please don't wait any longer." The girl's voice quivered with tears now. "Probably the jeep has broken down. Tim's always joking about it."

"While we're waitin', let's drink the bride's health." The Slag's companion, in a newly-found sobriety, stood swaying on the step, miraculously holding three bottles of lukewarm beer. "Get out some glasses someone . . ."

Enough glasses and plastic cups and tops of thermos flasks were found to go around, and everyone had a mouthful to drink to the bride. More speeches were made, more jokes handed round. Ten minutes passed. Another ten.

"Please go now," urged the girl, almost in a sort of anguish. "You've all been so very kind. I know how tired you are. And the skedule . . ."

"Well, we'd better be making a move," admitted Joe reluctantly. "Sure this was the turn-off where he was to meet you?"

"If this is the Hayes' Creek turn-off, yes. Besides, I knew it by that funny anthill shaped like a torpedo."

Silently the passengers filed back into the bus, each making his individual good-bye. When they were all settled, they looked back out the windows. The girl had moved back under the shade of a cork-tree, and was standing stiffly waving to them. The little red plastic purse she was holding in her hand made a splotch of bright colour in the grey-green landscape.

Big Joe looked steadily into the rear-vision mirror above his head. All at once it seemed to him as though forty-one pairs of eyes were directed into that tiny four-by-three piece of mercury-backed glass, imploring, pleading, threatening. The accusing silence seeped through to his cabin, as though the loud-speaker system were reversed. The eye of the Bouncer seemed especially accusing.

Quietly he slipped the truck into reverse gear. He noted with grim amusement the ripple of relief which washed over the tired, dusty passengers. Grandma sat back with an audible sigh of relief, wiping her eyes. The six children nearly whooped with delight and craned out the windows. Emmie gave an audible sniffle. Even the Icicle relaxed. Slowly the great vehicle reversed until it was level with the girl.

"Better hop on," Big Joe called down to her. "I'll run you along to the settlement."

"Oh no, thank you so much." The girl was scarlet with embarrassment, but behind the tears in her eyes, which had only been waiting the solace of solitude to fall, the driver thought he detected relief, too.

"Hop in," he repeated gruffly.

"But your skedule . . . ?" The girl's voice was a shamed apology.

"Can go to the devil!" It was Big Joe's ultimate gesture.

But scarcely had she got her foot on the step when a shout came ringing through the timber, followed by a tall young man dressed in army shorts, boots, hat and nothing else. She paused, looking back over her shoulder and a loveliness came to life in her face. The shabby case slid from her hand, slithered over the gravel and came to a rest in the little gutter by the roadside.

After a few seconds, the young man lifted his head.

"Thanks," he said curtly to Big Joe, lifting one hand. His glance scuttered along the rows of friendly faces lining the bus like so many head-lamps. "Thanks," he said again.

In silence they picked up the suit-case, its blue ribbon still trailing. He slung a stick through the handle and the girl took one end. The young man clutched the bulky brown-paper parcel under his other arm. Farewells showered down on them like confetti. Good-bye. Good luck. Good-bye.

They set off walking down the bush track towards the knobby black mountain with the minute cleared squares of banana plantations huddled round its feet. In silence the passengers watched them, until the tiny figures were lost in the green waves of cork-trees.

Big Joe glanced in his rear-vision mirror and started up his engine.

Peter Bladen

Cinderella and the Five Brass Bands

An extract from Lazy Walkabout, the story of a twentieth-century journey of exploration from Perth to Adelaide, by bicycle and other means. When the author visited Menzies, he was being given a lift by car through the country north of Kalgoorlie, by the new rector of Boulder on his first visit to outlying parishioners.

Most of the mines on the road north of Kalgoorlie were discovered by prospectors moving in and out of the Old Camp as the rains dictated.

Towns sprang to life, lusty settlements like Kanowna with a population of 15,000, sixteen pubs and almost as many stores; Black Flag; and Paddington, a thriving community with twenty-three hotels.

Kanowna is now a ghost town with only one businessman, and during some weeks perhaps not that many customers. All we saw of it was a name on a gate. Of Black Flag I believe there is nothing left at all. Only the station remains at Paddington, one or two dilapidated huts, and tracks in the bush where streets were once surveyed. As one old-timer said: "It's as hard to find anything there as it is to find feathers on a frog."

The bitumen came to an end at Broad Arrow, the place where the early prospectors were guided by broad arrow marks in the dust. At one time the town boasted nine pubs and a brewery. Today it is reminiscent of a comb with most of the teeth missing. There is still one hotel, and I believe it has a sign on the gate: "If this gate isn't closed more better it will be shut."

The lady we wished to see had gone away, her neighbour told us with envy in her voice. She said it was a God-forsaken spot and that she didn't go to church herself, but it seemed that there was little to do in Broad Arrow except to be good.

The road seemed to run on forever, beyond the mullock heaps of Bardoc, deserted Canegrass, Goongarrie (which means something rude), and the Sand Queen at Comet Vale, past Adelong station, and on to Menzies.

Menzies is a scattered township now. Broken carts rot in the dust, and the roads wander everywhere. There are ruins in the main street, and a sprinkling of homes and stores. Once there were three daily papers.

Gold was discovered at the spot by the miner Menzie, when his camel stumbled over quartz-gold floaters. A township sprang into life, with thirteen pubs, brass bands and fire brigades.

At the one remaining hotel we had lunch in a dining-room with drawn shutters and a fan to combat the heat. There we met the Bennetts. Mrs. Bennett is a cheery soul. We asked for bread and cheese and a pickled onion, but received a delightful meal, including a welcome jug of ice-cold water. She told us that she was a "Pom", and she and her husband had travelled a lot in the bush, prospecting and living on hard rations; and she gossiped about the ghost towns.

"What will it be?" asked the rector when we were leaving.

"On the house," said Mrs. Bennett. "We never charge a wearer of the cloth!"

"What about mine?" I asked. "I don't wear the cloth!"

"What will we do with him?" she chanted. "He's such a shy young man. I'll tell you what. I'll be a real Aussie and toss you for it. Where's your coin? Heads it will be 5/6. Tails you go free." She didn't stand to win anything. I tossed, and it was tails. We shook hands with the Dinkum Aussie, and I went away with the rector, feeling, as a shy young man should, like a thief among princes.

We saw only a handful of people in town. "But on Saturday nights," we were told, "you should see them! They come from miles!" Later we learned that a previous licensee had willed that beer should be free at the pub every Saturday night for fifteen minutes.

A few miles from Menzies we came to the boundary of Jeedamya station. There were frequent gates and cattle traps, and numerous small willy-willies. A week earlier Menzies hotel had lost its veranda in a willy-willy and when we reached Leonora we found the town still recovering from a "cock-eyed Bob" which had just about flattened it.

McPherson's homestead is an oasis, a house with pleasant lawns set in 500,000 acres of parched lands, running about 5,000 sheep. We chatted on cool verandas and were treated to afternoon tea. I remembered Bullfinch, where I had seen no gold, when we left Jeedamya

without seeing any sheep. The land was thirsty as no rain had fallen for nearly twelve months.

Not long afterwards we saw a humped hill in the distance. Leonora and Gwalia were just beyond it. The twin towns are set in a wide plain, but their immediate environs are marked with a series of hills, crowned with rocks or reservoirs.

A large heap of bottles greeted us at the approaches to Leonora. There is a respectable main street, wide, with trees and a bitumen road. Once it was a thriving town, with at least seven hotels, including the White House Hotel, which was brought here from Menzies and is one of the few still standing. In 1908 Leonora was named the most progressive township in Australia, with many amenities found only in the larger cities, such as electric lighting and the tram service, a water scheme, and a fire service with electric alarms in the main street. In its hey-day it had a population of 8,000, but now the population of the whole Roads Board area of over 12,000 square miles is less than a quarter of that.

The township was built at a central point between the Sons of Gwalia mine and the Four Mile lease, but the gold petered out at the latter and there has since been a keen rivalry between Leonora and Gwalia. Each town has its own school, and convent, church services, stores and hotels. The hospital, which is shared by both, is the only building on the road connecting them, standing in splendid isolation.

Gwalia is the mining settlement, and Leonora the "white-collar" business centre and the "cockies'" town, yet it is estimated that sixty per cent of its people are kept employed by their less pretentious rival.

We drove on towards Gwalia. The hospital is a building with a history. The main portion was brought from Malcolm on a jinker. In the early days it had the services of Dr. Bertram Wills, later of Harley Street where he was considered one of the world's leading surgeons. The doctor owned the first car in Leonora, and once it is said he ran over a man, and in reversing to see what had caused the bump, ran over his victim a second time.

In the recent willy-willy the hospital lost its roof, and years of accumulated dust crashed down with the ceiling.

Gwalia is more of a shanty town, the Cinderella among our mining towns. It has had practically the least spent on it, and has proved to be one of the most permanent. Apart from the hotel, which was the first State hotel to be built in Western Australia, and which is reputed to be the only one run at a profit, such is the thirst of miners,

it seems little more than a collection of chicken coops and corrugated iron shacks, though some are surprisingly comfortable inside. In every storm the houses lose more iron sheets. I would have thought that one decent cock-eyed Bob would send the whole place sky-high. It is a town half-made, for the site wasn't planned, and the roads are merely those pieces of ground where there aren't any buildings. At night the streets are well lit. It becomes a luminous skeleton of a town.

Later I went climbing hills to view the townships. Tank Hill I would have thought a good place for lovers, with quiet corners behind the buttresses of the reservoir, and it wasn't surprising to hear that its name was once "Smoodgers' Hill".

Though behind nearly every scattered bush and strewn over the rocky ground there are broken bottles and rusted tins, and even battered toys and the remains of old cane chairs, and other evidence that many footsteps have wandered here in the past, there is always the fond hope that the last rains may have uncovered nuggets never before revealed to man, and visitors are spurred by tales of recent discoveries, such as that of the Jessie Alma just over the railway line, where much gold was obtained. But all I got out of my excursion was a fright when a fox leapt from the rocks ahead of me, and a sunburnt neck, a few photographs, one glass marble and a hole in my shoe.

I was to learn that the "hill" I had climbed was Mt. Leonora, and that the cairn of stones on its summit was placed there by John Forrest. From the summit there was a wonderful view. Below were the scattered settlements with their toy houses, and the mine like a meccano set gone mad, with a salt pan where the waste was dumped, and on the plain, painted shrubs stretching to the distant ranges.

Here Forrest came in 1869, when at the age of twenty-two he was appointed leader of an expedition to search for the ill-fated explorer Leichhardt. Almost every high point in this eastern hinterland was visited, and many were named by Forrest, while quite a few cairns were erected as trigonometrical points. But far out beyond these horizons still lies the secret of Leichhardt, which Forrest failed to unravel.

Forrest marked the waterholes which others were to use. In 1895 Booden, a prospector, was the first to find gold in this area. His camp was burned by natives and all his provisions stolen, and he had to walk into Cue barefooted, living off the land. Edward "Doodah" Sullivan, in the next year, found gold near the present town site of

Leonora. He died a few months later, and his grave is still on the site of the lease.

Still in 1896, three men—led by Jack Carlson “the big-hearted Swede”, and backed by Tobias brothers, well-known storekeepers on the goldfields—found gold and obtained the famous Sons of Gwalia lease (meaning, in translation, “Sons of Wales”). The partners sold the mine for £5,000. Carlson was buried in Kalgoorlie in 1944, his headstone a memorial to the fact that he discovered the mine. The Sons of Gwalia mine has produced over two million ounces of fine gold, surpassed only by the Great Boulder mine in the Golden West, and it still has a long life ahead of it.

The successful development of the mine was largely due to the work of Herbert Hoover, one of the early managers, and later a President of the United States. He first came to the eastern goldfields in 1896, at the age of twenty-two, an orphan boy who had fought against poverty to achieve a wonderful destiny.

It is a poetic thought that he must have visited the White House Hotel in this outback mining town long before his entrance under far different circumstances, into the White House in Washington. Indeed the present licensee still holds, as a keepsake, a bill left unpaid by the now ex-President.

With the rector I was shown over the mine. The present manager went through old records, climbing on tables, and peering into high and dusty shelves, in search of Hoover’s signature for us. We saw a glass scale model of the mine, which is said to have the deepest underlay shaft in the Southern Hemisphere. It is possibly the only gold-mine in Australia where horses are still worked and stabled underground.

In 1921 there was a disastrous fire which held up production for several years, but so rich were its potentialities that the mine lived to reach new peaks of prosperity. All events are dated from the fire, either Before or After. Only those who were here Before, can claim to be old identities.

We saw the shaft, nearly a mile in length, and the winches, with the skips which carry the men into the earth to work, and bring back the ore which they obtain; the giant crusher, crunching away at the rock like a greedy animal, a machine rather reminiscent of a fat lady trying to rhumba in an enclosed space; and we saw the solutions and the filters and the slime, but still no gold. Everywhere we walked great clouds of powdery dust rose at our footsteps. We saw the power-house and the furnaces where 400 tons of wood a week are consumed, realising that not only lack of rain had left this country bare of

trees; and the great rooms of machinery with only one or two men in charge. We wondered what would happen if the machines suddenly rebelled. We also saw the manager's house, built for Herbert Hoover, with lofty ceilings and elegant rooms, the pleasant gardens where the manager's wife told us there were frequent snakes, and the wide views over the surrounding plains.

There are still 250 men employed at the mine, with room for more. It is interesting to recall that the pastoral industry in this area began as a move to feed the prospectors and miners, when sheep and cattle were brought overland from the Murchison in 1896, but the industry has far outgrown this humble need and is now a major asset to the State.

At the mine, the waters used in the various processes are stored in a swimming-pool. I spent some happy hours there, with Italians from the mine, and local youngsters, who referred to me as "Forrest", in tribute to the beard.

At the hotel there was hot water on tap—in both taps, in fact, as the pipes are close to the surface and the temperature was still over the century.

For many years there have been a lot of Italians working at Gwalia. We were told that they are good workers and have mixed well in community life. We had tea to the accompaniment of "Roll Out the Barrel", sung, I should think, in Italian. At one time there were seven languages spoken in the local bar, and a record time of twenty minutes was set for emptying an eighteen-gallon keg. The block and tackle used to raise the kegs from the cellar can still be seen.

It is a friendly place, and provides a good life for those who don't fear hard work, and prefer the comradeship and security of a country town to the confusion and stress of the modern cities.

After tea I sat on the lawns of the little park in Gwalia, where the children were playing Red Rover, and the Italians were singing to the strains of mouth-organs, or playfully wrestling with each other; and later I went for another swim in the floodlit pool.

It was pleasant to walk in the darkness with poetical thoughts and not to be bitten by anything.

Our last visit was to the homestead of Sturt Meadows, thirty miles away, named from the Sturt pea which grows there so profusely, the scarlet flower of the desert, first known to Dampier, Cunningham and Eyre, and found by Sturt in the Barrier Ranges in 1844.

It is a self-contained community, with orchard and poultry-run, gardens, a tennis court, even its own telephone system to various out-stations, and a power-house and butcher shop. We spent a pleasant

afternoon on the lawns by the swimming-pool, in the shade of palms and athol-tamarisks. This time one of the younger members of the party confused me with Henry Lawson.

On the way home we saw several emus, looking extremely frustrated when they were running, not having any arms or wings to wave; and there were many kangaroos.

On the road back to Kalgoorlie we took a different track for the first eighty miles.

At Malcolm we found half a dozen houses and the railway, old tracks in the bush, and a few heaps of rubble, but no sign of its old-time mayor and councillors. We missed the turn-off to Melita homestead, following a road which dwindled out at a windmill where we saw sheep, and on the way back plenty of 'roos. The road was a strange one, made by car-tracks wandering over bare soil and red-sand creek beds.

Tampa proved to be as transient a settlement as the namesake of its neighbour, Butterfly. And when we came to a hotel surrounded by scattered ruins and wind-blown mullock heaps, which we thought must surely be Tampa, we learned that Tampa was nearly twelve miles behind us, and we were in Kookynie.

Kookynie was once a lovely and prosperous town of nearly 3,000 people, with seven hotels and three churches, and even swimming-baths. Now it has its ruins and its memories, a few pepper-trees, and a re-treatment plant which is only just paying its way.

We called on the Brights, who live on the outskirts of town, and run a Pastoral Company. There had been little rain for two years, yet the agents had sent excellent reports on the last wool clip. The minerals in this thirsty soil surpass those of lusher pastures.

"This is the time of year," said Mr. Bright, "when you've just got to smile and make the most of it!" And Mrs. Bright prepared us a tasty lunch, and was cheerful despite the heat and the flies, and if her smile wore a little threadbare at times, she would say: "I've never been asked if I'd like to leave here; my husband's afraid I might say yes!"

We were told of the little girl who had never been baptised, because her parents couldn't locate sufficient god-parents in the dwindling township, and as we were leaving we suddenly had to retreat again to the house as gusts of wind whipped the nearby heaps of powdery mullock into clouds of swirling dust.

Once, I heard, there were five brass bands in Kookynie. Now its desolation is cheered only by the hosts of wildflowers which make it a place of beauty after the rains.

I had wanted to take a photograph at Niagara. The name derives from a thirty-foot fall of rock nearby, where the water streams after rain, and which some wag named Niagara Falls. Like Kookynie, Niagara did fall. Once there were four pubs at one intersection. It was one of the richest alluvial spots in the world. But when we passed through, I found nothing left to photograph.

Back in Menzies we saw less than on our first visit. Most of the town was blotted out in a dust-storm.

All the way back to Kalgoorlie I kept echoing: "Five brass bands!" Most of the townships which had flourished in a blaze of glory wherever gold was discovered, with substantial buildings, mayors, brass bands and swimming-pools, and which were the springboards whence prospectors set out on their lonely quests, and whither they returned to slake their thirst at innumerable pubs, were, in the words of one pioneer, "just like perishing mushrooms", their stones to be incorporated in the buildings of more permanent towns, their shanties transferred, or transformed into country chicken-coops.

Now that the population is more centralised, and men can travel greater distances to work by motor-vehicles, there is less need for the host of little towns, and the old prospectors, now that the hotels are closed, and the stores, which were their stepping-stones across the seas of sand, no longer encouraged to seek new El Dorados, retire with all their history and the genuine knowledge which textbooks cannot equal, to rest homes in the city, or street benches in the sun at Kalgoorlie, now a mild suburban town in the twilight of its glory, while only a few remain in their lonely bush huts, doggedly dreaming.

Among all the rambling words of the glorious past, of fortunes won and reefs yet unrevealed, one can glimpse the old courage, the pioneering spirit, the comradeship and the humanity of men who suffered together and saved the lives of their mates in gallant quests for water, and also the breezy laughter which enriched their lives.

Of such a place as Burtville, for instance, there remains little trace. The name has disappeared from many maps, and all that I have seen of Burtville was a programme from the Christmas Sports of 1900, but if this is any indication, Burtville must have been a rollicking place.

The programme commenced with a burst of song:

THE MULGA'S LAST WAIL

*If you think at Christmas you are likely to be dull,
Ramble out to Burtville, where you're certain to be full.
Don't come out in Sunday clothes and put on whips of swagger,
For we will be in bowyangs, to enjoy our Christmas stagger.*

The various events included the "100 yards Sprunt (draught)"—Sprunt was the local brewer—while the prizes ranged from a bottle of hair restorer, a fourteen-foot hole, one compound fracture, a bung eye, and a coffin, to the Scotch reel donated by Mr. Piper, and the butcher's dog donated by Mr. Barker.

The programme was studded with advertisements: "Are you married? This is the place to buy Gloves for your wife! Are you single? This is the place to buy Gloves for somebody else's wife" . . . "I cure fits. What sort of fits? Fits of hunger" . . . "Why is he like a clock? Because he can't help ticking."

Probably Burtville is now another empty paddock in the outback with a few abandoned shafts and dumps of mullock for its memorial, but I like to think that the brave and hearty spirit of its pioneers did not die with the township, but has scattered far and wide, and that the lives of those who lived in the many similar ghost towns are still enhancing a world of wider horizons, for who would imagine that a little girl brought up in a town which began with tents and packing-cases would perform on concert platforms throughout the world, or that a boy who played marbles with pebbles in the desert dust would prove to be one of the greatest billiard-players the world has seen? And just as the names of Eileen Joyce and Walter Lindrum are renowned throughout the world, so the little towns where they lived, Boulder and Broad Arrow, and the names of others now booming and others now ghost towns, should also be remembered.

At 5.30 we reached our destination: churches and traffic and train whistles; typewriters, gardens and trees; people walking, and cycling, and driving, and children shouting—civilisation! There was lightning in the sky and a few drops of rain had already fallen. And still I thought of those lonely roads, and the miles of thirsty paddocks—and the "five brass bands"!

Mary D. Pinney

Four Pigs for Moa

Au dropped the block of ice wrapped in its hessian bag and let his large brown body gratefully down upon it. The heat rose in suffocating waves, but his seat was a cool one.

"There will be trouble when we get back," warned Siri, squatting beside him on the cold sack. "Already it is only the size of a shilling block." He looked anxiously at Au, sensing revolt in the older man.

"There's always trouble since I started working under a woman!" Au spoke resentfully, wriggling his toes unhappily in the thick shoes and ragged socks he considered his social standing demanded. "'Au,' she says, 'where are the tea-towels?' Well, she told me to wash in the sea, and I washed; a towel is a towel, and a man must dry himself. But such a screeching! You would think it was murder."

"You were a fool to use a tea-towel," Siri rebuked his friend smugly, running the sharp wooden comb through his mop of black hair. "It is a good life being cook-boy in such a house."

"It's not the life for me! 'Au,' she calls, 'pluck that fowl straight away.' And I pluck it, every feather. I didn't like doing that to a bird I call each morning by name, but I wanted to please. Could I help it that the thing escaped, crying in a thin, mad voice, and running between her legs? If she wanted it killed first why did she not say so?"

The house-boy beside him grinned:

"When I served it at dinner she ran from the room and was sick."

Their laughter rang out in childish delight down the empty road and they rocked together happily upon the dwindling ice-block.

"You are a fool all the same." Siri thrust Au from him. "You are throwing away your chances."

"And you," countered Au, "know nothing of real life at all. How could you, being so very young? In the old days we lived, going out into the mountains with white men who could walk better and think better than we. Calling 'Boy!' angrily, yet being our friends. Now no

one calls 'Boy!' like that; they speak in careful words that freeze the heart."

"But..."

"There are no buts. We had leaders then we could follow. Like in the war. And now, tea-towels, chickens, ice-blocks!" He spat disgustedly and shifted position, his trousers clinging wetly to his long legs.

"All the same we make money, far more than we can spend."

"Money? Pah! I have a house in Hanuabada village with lights and an iron roof. I can no longer sit there in comfort on a mat in case you think I do not earn enough to buy a chair. I listen to the squalling of my radio and wear trousers that rub my legs. I have," Au's voice rose shrilly, "too much money and too little work. If there was one man left who would shout angrily 'Boy!' I would follow where he went for no money at all."

"What you want is a wife before you get too old and mad. A nice comfortable wife, waiting at the day's end."

"A fat, lazy slut, squealing: 'Au, do this! Au, do that!' Take her yourself and welcome."

"You're mad already," cried Siri, rising suddenly and kicking the ice-block from beneath the big man. He scampered off down the road, laughing light-heartedly.

Au scrambled to his feet as the car drew up beside him. The Sinabada at the wheel scowled down at him.

"Au! What do you think you're doing dawdling there with the ice?" Her voice was sharp with annoyance and he could see her hands quiver on the wheel.

If she dared, she would hit me, thought Au, seeing the impatience and uncertainty in her eyes. Go on, he willed, swear, show some authority.

"Get in the back," said the woman lamely, "and do please hurry." Au picked up the sack, dropping it into the car.

"Take it yourself," he snapped impudently. "I finish."

Turning he leapt up the bank at the side of the road and ran off up the hill; he heard the Sinabada calling shrilly after him, the car starting up with gears grinding. The pad beneath his feet was smooth and warm; it led up and up, down and down, to the level of the plain.

On the plain, sheltered from the sea breeze by low hills, the sun beat in rich hot waves, drawing out dry aromatic scents from brown grass and stunted trees. Au discarded his shirt, hanging it upon a bush for some lucky traveller to find; before he reached the foot of

Hombrom Bluff he had thrown his socks for any passing fish to sample in the little creek. But his boots he hung about his neck by the laces for currency in whatever village he might come to.

Where the track crawled out on to the flat at the top of the Bluff, Au met an old man with a single string about his middle, going down to Port Moresby with a bundle of woven tapa cloth. With him he traded his trousers for a long wide belt of the soft beaten bark. Winding it about his narrow hips and drawing it up between his legs to hang in a black and brown sporran, he shuddered deliciously in the keen mountain air, shaking off the last depression, swinging towards the skyline chanting the song of the wayfarer upon the trail.

He travelled many days, and with each day he journeyed back into the past; the memory of tea-towels, chickens, and white Sina-badas growing ever fainter, merging with the white mists that lay in cottonwool swaths along the valleys.

Beside him as he marched Au could hear the small spirit voice of his father singing in his ear: "The village on the plateau is a friendly place. There I found your mother and brought her down to the sea ..." A dead voice speaking softly, but there stood the village, perched above the gorge, and Au walked into it as a prodigal returned.

If it was the scar running across his woolly head, memento of a Jap sniper, and the stories falling from a ready tongue, that caught the attention of the villagers, it was the gleaming set of dentures that won him a place in the chief's hut. Au could look back now with satisfaction upon the agony as each good tooth had come grating from its socket; sitting in the big hut, warm and well fed, he was the honoured guest.

Feeble the chief might be, and his eyes dim to catch the shadow of an enemy, but now there was not a man who would dare the threat of those magic teeth, grinning horribly from the vantage point of a veranda post after dark, terrible jaws ready to snap an intruder into the cold land of the dead.

But it was the boots, the old army boots, that charmed the girl, Moa.

She had stood before Au, tall and straight in the scanty grass kilt of her tribe, on the day of his arrival in the village, and she had looked first at the boots slung about his neck, and then at Au.

When Au looked back at her he forgot the dangers of marriage, he forgot the girls of Hanuabada and their insatiable demands; all he saw was Moa, sleek and polished as a tree after rain, and behind Moa he saw his sons.

He would offer a price for her that no father could refuse. Three

pigs, or even four. It was a big price, but was he not a man of substance? Even without the pigs he must be considered a catch. If Moa was the sorcerer's daughter, what of it? He could be a sorcerer too . . . he could be anything at all when Moa glanced past the army boots and smiled with bright dark eyes.

It needed only a few simple tricks such as a soldier might teach a favourite "boong" to impress upon the sorceror that here was a rival with whom it would be well to treat, but when Au opened negotiations he looked upon the younger man in amazement.

"Wives?" he queried. "Pigs? What have things so unimportant to do with men like you—like us? All these people can be as children to you and me, if we work together." He drew his stiff old body up painfully so that the ribs stood out under the mottled brown skin: "I was a great man in these mountains once, and why not again." He clutched Au's arm with a thin dirty claw, already feeling the return of power emasculated since the intrusion of foreign creeds.

Au stared at the ancient man in silence, thinking, "I could be chief of them." The old ways and the old gods became his slogan.

There were no women in the solemn procession that wound its way out of the village on a grey mist-laden dawn to the hidden place where the dethroned god had languished since the last missionary had strode into the village, luring away its followers from the dark allegiance with tales and coloured beads. The jungle rain pattered gently on a million leaves, whispering and singing as though unseen companions kept step with the monstrous wooden idol lurching homewards, fungus growths glowing faintly from the sightless head and stiff formal limbs. The village men walked gravely beneath their burden, shrinking just a little as the sorceror leapt insanely before them, shrieking his awful runes.

In the village the women waited by the fires, and there, standing tall and dominant, Au commanded them:

"Tonight we will make our feast as our fathers made it," and for a long minute there was silence, for all knew what he meant, and the penalty for it.

By common consent the whole village asembled after dusk had hidden them from prying eyes, and the voice of an ancient crone rose trembling in the ancient cry; from the drum between his skinny knees her senile husband brought the echoing tom-totom. Drum after drum answered him, voice called to voice, with the shrill shout of Moa speaking the desire of all:

"The pig!" she cried. "Fetch the pig!" Old cruelties and old lusts stirred in her blood.

"Let the feast begin!" yelled Au above the rising clamour, but when at last the pig died screaming over the fire, against the rolling anthem of the drums, he went out into the shadows behind the huts and retched out his soul in shame. There in the grateful dark he remembered too clearly the man who had cried "Boy!" angrily, but as a friend, who had condemned in no uncertain voice the thing Au had dragged into the village from an old hidden grave.

For many days after that night the people went about their business in satiated quiet, looking furtively down the trail sometimes, as though the scorching pig had sent its voice across the mountains, down to the white man, crying for vengeance. Au sat in the big hut sombre and silent, with too much food in his belly and too much betel-nut in his mouth and head. From his heavy eyes he watched Moa. She seemed to be always there, glancing coyly over her plump shoulder with provocative, pebble-bright eyes.

Moa wore the army boots now, clumping proudly among lesser maidens, and she was the only person in the village of whom Au was afraid. To him she meant the old savagery balanced against something he had known that shone brightly in his life as a full moon rising above the clouds; but there were nights without the moon when he might find Moa, and when he thought of them Au was afraid.

During the daytime he watched the girl, and at dusk he followed her down the village street to the witch-doctor's hut. But Moa knew her worth and how to bargain with it; though she might hesitate at the doorway, swinging her short grass skirt, she always went in to the family fire and never a step beyond.

Each night Au thought of her and his shadowy sons, so that it was not long before he stood with Moa at the end of the village and marked out the place for the house that would be theirs as man and wife.

"Four pigs," insisted the sorcerer, glancing wickedly up at Au, "at least four pigs. She is worth five." And Au, drunk with a new madness, agreed, following Moa humbly as she cried: "Here and here! Two rooms and a kitchen." For she had listened well to Au's tales of his own fabulous village by the sea.

"Tea-towels!" thought Au suddenly, regaining a little sanity, "and chickens." And it was Moa's turn to follow, until she cornered him one evening in the dusk of the completed hut, holding him there with the bitter fragrance of wild herbs in her plaited armbands, and the desire of her withheld body.

"Our home," she whispered, touching him with tender hands and

making the lightning play on taut nerves. "Our own hut; we must make sure the god protects us, he must have his gift on the doorposts so that he may see and know. After you have done that . . ." She pressed against him for a delicious moment that made Au's heart thunder.

But he baulked at the thing she asked:

"No, not that! The pig . . . I can never forget the pig."

He brought out his shameful weakness desperately, measuring it against the thing she asked for now.

"You are afraid!" taunted Moa softly, and he felt her going from him, the warm delight of her body cooling under his hands.

"What is a pig, screaming as it dies? Au, this is something more, the safety of our home and our children, your sons."

"No!" Au's fingers bit into her hard young flesh. "They would find out and our house would fall to nothing but weeds and the jungle. The sons would never be born. Think, woman, how can we trust this old god as far as that? Two of us would die in the white man's jail for the blood you would have us shed."

"If it was only a woman's? An old woman of no use to anyone. A hag who talks and talks all day and in her sleep. Surely no one could mind that?"

"A woman who talks and talks," repeated Au weakly, looking down at the girl, "an old woman, perhaps very near death already?"

"Tomorrow," Moa moved closer, her hands soft and gentle, "Tomorrow." She edged away then, running back through the shadows to her own hut.

At the top of the rise Au and Moa waited. Down in the hollow where the water seeped from the black rock into the silver pool, the old woman ladled out her gourd-full painfully, talking to herself without ceasing in a whining monotone. As she bent over her scanty grass skirt stuck out behind like a mangy tuft of tail.

"You see?" Moa whispered, her body tense beside Au. "Of what use is a thing like that to anyone? Hurry, and get it done."

She pushed Au a step down the slope, but there he stuck, leaning back against her hand, the tomahawk swinging at his side.

"We cannot do this thing!" he breathed, and Moa looked up at him with eyes hard in contempt. Silently she rose to her feet and in the same movement snatched the small axe from his hand, launching herself down the slope. Like a tiger cat the girl fell upon the old woman, bringing her screeching to the ground. Au saw her raise her arm to strike, the tomahawk glinting.

"Stop!" he yelled, hurtling down upon the struggling pair, and as the axe swung to the greying head his blow knocked it sideways, so that it struck the thin wrinkled arm, drawing a long red gash down the skin. A thin shriek of pain and rage rose from the old hag as Au dragged Moa from her.

Furiously the girl turned upon him:

"Fool!" she spat, her nails ripping his cheek. "Coward!" And Au hit her once, and then again. For a moment they glared at one another, until Moa dropped her eyes, putting a hand to her bleeding mouth and whimpering a little. Au felt the past falling away like a dream that is over, he was suddenly Au, who owned a house with an iron roof and electric light, and Moa was his woman and he loved her. He shook her roughly:

"Get up the hill, and fast! You are a useless, stupid creature, hardly worth one pig. We go at once back to Moresby, and there you will work for the Sinabada, washing tea-towels and plucking chickens. There I will sit on my veranda listening to the noise of my radio, and there I will make you my wife and we will have many sons all like their father."

He strode off ahead, loping along the track to the village, and Moa trotted obediently at his heels, licking the blood that trickled down her chin. Four pigs, he had promised. No other girl had brought more than two, and then often small and sickly. She crooned happily to herself, watching the play of muscle under the bronze skin of Au's back.

The old woman dipped her gashed arm in the pool and reached with gnarled toes for the forgotten tomahawk, dragging it beneath her dirty fringe of skirt. She looked after Moa beneath tangled grey hair and chuckled, showing a small red tongue curling between stumps of ancient teeth.



The Lament of the Bulldozers

The bulldozers have bolted
Over the cliffs to the unkempt sea,
All praising as they fall
Their eccentricity.

Hushed is every main-road,
Airfield and soldier-settlement,
As from the depths of the ocean
Gurgles this last lament.

“Wattle and sheoak no more
Shall fall that a Ford may run on tar,
On orchid and violet
No man shall park his car.

“Let that gross plain that stretches
From Fremantle to Wangaratta
Be steep with human mountains
That no steel blade can scatter.

“Let us bulldoze upwards
From poor to rich, from good to bad,
From the horizontal
No pleasure can be had.

“Let saints and villains land
Their secret agents on our shores,
Let nuns be chaster still,
And let there be some whores.

“Through solid niceness let
A shudder of unreason run,
Stick up the bankclerk brain
With the body’s gun.

“Let wild extravagance
Some vast, stupendous party give,
At which no man shall die
Till he’s begun to live.

“Alas for spindly towns,
Main streets as stiff as honesty,
Cities whose dungless squares
Denote equality.

“The straight shall be made crooked
And rough the level graded plain.
To hell with regularity,
You’ll never see us again!”

GEOFFREY DUTTON

Lines to an Ally

I’m tired of thinking of life and death.
I’d rather think of you my girl,
Of how your body’s white is firm
And never-dying to the mouth.

The taste of love is moist and dark,
But it lights the senses like a flame
To something harder than mere day,
The immortality within the heart.

By day you are a woman, girl,
And two and two are always five.
And clever as algebra you deserve
The will-you-have-a-biscuit smile.

But when the night has made its bed
And brought you silent to my side,
I know that you are not polite,
That you and I must outlast death.

RAY MATHEW

A Homage to Debussy

Bearing their birds and gardens on their hats
The ladies of suburbia have come
Fresh in their sweeping skirts from sweeping mats
To grace my mother's afternoon at-home.

For each, a delicately-different china cup,
For all, the scandal and the price of eggs;
For me, my bright white sailor-suit starched-up,
Its pinked seams chafing me between my legs,

And the white-frocked Renoir child with the flaxen hair
Tied in those chocolate-boxy bows he makes—
I am to take her to play in the open air,
Leaving her mother to the tea and cakes.

Into the stare of the afternoon sun at the grass,
Wandering out in silence, hand in hand,
I, her diminutive and dutiful Pelleas,
She, my mysterious, miniature Melisande,

I see us yet, a portrait lost to tense,
Rapt in the heat as flowers in their aroma,
Fixed by the master's glaze of innocence . . .
But life shakes rudely at pictorial coma:

The sweep has left behind his tin of soot—
These things must happen; why, I cannot tell:
For every Adam, his forbidden fruit,
For every Melisande, her destined well:

"Put in your head." The summer air is cursed
As Eden's with the scented breath of sin.
The fig-tree shudders. "You put yours in first."
The bamboo stirs and sighs. My head goes in.

My sailor-suit, the glow of Renoir's paint,
Become our weekly charwoman's despair,
Life's evil critic, throwing off restraint,
Empties his inkpot on the flaxen hair.

Golliwogs, now,
 We run in to show
 The people what we have done:
 We cause a creaking of the tight-laced sitters.
 Somebody shrieking,
 Everyone speaking,
 One of them drops her bun:
 They all seek hiding-places for their titters.

And we are trapped in passion's aftermath,
 The prophecy and prototype of others:
 The double expiation of the bath,
 The hissings of the geyser and the mothers

Conclude this formal afternoon at-home.
 I wonder would she think me past all shame,
 Rejoicing in the roses of her small, spanked bottom,
 A lover of Renoirs who has forgotten her name?

RONALD MCUAIG

The Charwomen

Ho, ho! Such a sight I've seen
 I can't look long or short
 But only in between
 And fear to break in half
 With a belly-rumbling laugh.
 Today at half-past four,
 Ho, ho, ho, I saw
 Fifty-one or more
 Magpies loop the loop
 Climb, roll and swoop
 So much out of fashion
 I saw no birds at all

But fifty-one charwomen in a park
 Tumbling in a merry lark
 Trying to shed 'twixt work and tea
 Centuries of propriety.

Their dowdy, heavy, full black skirts
Were never made for somersaults;
Ho, ho! Nor their off-white bloomers shaking
As two great rolls of flesh went quaking
Over head and over turkey.
Some joined hands and danced about,
Their ample bosoms burst their clouts
And up and sideways bounced a bulk
Of dugs would make a milkmaid sulk.
Then one and all they seized their pails
And turned to me their serious tails—
Fifty-one or more, I said,
And went sedately home to bed.

Laughter the old Troll
Nicked me in the eyes;
Now though I look straight
I only see crosswise,
And when amongst the clods
The magpies search for grubs,
I'll see old greasy Kate
Flicking with her broom
The dust from room to room,
Or moving a chair for fluff.
Her skirt will strain and swell
As she bends low enough;
And ho, ho, ho, to tell
How much I liked her lark
At half-past four in the park!

ERIC C. ROLLS

Neilma Sidney

The Return

ALL day they had been beating up into it.

There were ten of them sailing from Hobart to Melbourne on the sixty-five foot cutter *Saga*, returning to Sydney via Melbourne after competing unsuccessfully in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. Nine of them, seasoned ocean sailors, had gone on the race, but one, Anthony, was a new-comer with just a splash of harbour sailing behind him. He also had wanted to race southwards but had not made the crew, so setting his heart on joining the ship for the return trip he had hopped a flight to Hobart and arrived just in time to jump aboard the *Saga* before she sailed. Now he wondered why he'd travelled all that way just to sit on a wet deck and be blown backwards in a fifty-mile westerly gale.

As he sat cold and hunched in the lee of the cockpit, his eyes dulled and strained behind his thick glasses, he never remembered feeling more miserable. The *Saga* was thudding into the troughs in ugly fashion as wave upon wave lifted high her bows and then let her fall down hard. The water came streaming and frothing along the lee deck, the hiss and steam of its passage and departure over the stern lost in the roar of the wind. Anthony felt the water around his feet in the cockpit and when he looked along the deck or out astern nothing but the wasteland of angry grey ridges met his eyes, the sharp-edged combers which in spite of the swiftness of their eastward passage seemed to tarry under the yacht and came out slapping her on the counter as if in parting punishment.

Something must go, thought Anthony, either the staysail with the split in the seam or the stormsail. Or why not the mast? Crack and drag the gear over. Singlemasted, once she's over you're gone. He peered for'ard through the transparent plastic cockpit cover at it and let his eyes travel up the long stretch of straining spar to where the tattered pennant wildly streamed. And he glanced through his smeared lens astern to where the thousand-foot rock of Curtis Island

loomed. If there was trouble they'd never bend on another sail in time to prevent a disaster on a lee shore.

Roy, seated calmly and erectly to weather of the tiller outside of the shelter, seemed unconcerned. He was whistling a little tune between his teeth that swiftly the wind whipped away and although his eyes never left the oncoming waves, he was steering the ship as casually as on the fine-weather days on the Tasmanian east coast. A sudden gale in Bass Strait means nothing to him, thought Anthony.

"Look out, a beaut," Roy said quietly, glancing neither at Anthony nor at the slim, blond youth Leslie, his companion on the watch, seated beside him. He stared ahead as the wave came aboard amidships, and swished its way round the tarp protector right into the cockpit. This was old stuff to Roy, and Leslie, though but twenty-one, had been in two gales before and was as indifferent as the older man. Only Anthony, feeling the water swirl around his bare ankles and seep down between the jacket and trousers of his oilskins, felt a deep inner resentment. You can have your ocean sailing, he thought, you and Leslie and the whole darn bunch of you. If he ever got back to shore he would never leave it again.

It was strange he'd had so little idea of what lay ahead or of the fact that the trip would be such a let-down. When he reached Hobart to join the *Saga* he expected some sort of friendly greeting but found that no one cared whether he was there or not. Bernard, his French neighbour who had first taken him sailing, just said "'Allo Tony" and turned back to what he was doing. Old Mac swore at him for landing on the deck with a clatter; Lee, who usually sailed on *Laurine*, raised his hand—that was the one friendly thing. The dark, lean, handsome bloke standing by the shrouds, a stranger who turned out to be Roy, just nodded his head. Chris, Bob and Stewart Irving the cook were up town getting last-minute supplies.

Down below the others were as matter of fact.

"Why Anthony, fancy you here!" Mr. Fred, the owner, spoke slowly, his mind somewhere else. And Bill who had first suggested that he join them in Hobart, seemed as disinterested as the others as Anthony stepped into the main cabin.

"Take a bunk back aft," he said. "It's the only one left and the chaps don't like shifting bunks. You'll be right there."

He wondered now if he should have accepted the situation or should have insisted on being in the main cabin sharing a bunk with one of the others while they were on watch. But no, he took the worst bunk in the ship, wedged in as it was aft of Mr. Fred's cabin in the stern, near the engine, with the pump shaft at his ear. He stowed

his gear under the mattress, hopped into his disreputable slacks and sweater and went up on deck. He'd come for the ocean sailing and he'd get that at any rate.

How much a yacht can change, he thought. Now she's only a battered wooden animal butting her head into hills, dropping into valleys, unsaddled, the decks stripped of everything but the reins that hold her sails. That morning in Hobart she was cluttered as a barge, horizontal, still, burdened with the mass of gear and supplies. He remembered the pleasure of preparing the ship for sea while the sightseers gazed enviously down. He felt as quietly pleased as if he'd always been in the *Saga*, a veteran ocean sailor of years. He wished Anne had been there to see him off.

He leaned back, reached down through his oilskins to his trouser pocket for a cigarette and lit it carefully in the matchbox top. It was strange out here on the ocean, he thought, strange now to think of Anne. You lost all sense of having ever been part of any other life, of ever having known any other human beings. It seemed there was only water and Roy and Leslie, and with Roy and Leslie so remote there was really only wetness and the wind and the passage of time.

"Why don't you go below, Anthony?" Roy was asking.

"No thanks." He came out of his reverie. "I like to watch storms," he said hastily.

"Well, you go along then," Roy said to Les. "There's no point in the three of us being here and Ant will call you if we need you. You're staying, eh Tony?"

"Yes," he said quickly, a little embarrassed. He didn't want to be shut in down there in the cabin. If he could only stay in the cockpit, just sit there and be left alone, he might get by.

Les hopped nimbly up on to the deck and went below. A minute later another large wave came over. Anthony saw the boom shiver as the water hit it. He looked out again to Curtis Island and back at the stormsail fiercely drawing.

"We're jake," Roy said, sensing his concern. "This isn't anything. She's gaining."

Well if this isn't anything, the day from Hobart must have been a dream, Anthony thought. It could never have happened that we sailed down Storm Bay in the warm January sunlight. He remembered Mt. Wellington standing out clearly, a deep blue in the distance, and the thickly wooded dark hills running to the shore. It was the first time he'd been in Tasmania and he watched the houses dwindle, the open country begin and the unexpected valleys reveal

themselves as they passed. He remembered the smoke rising eastwards in one valley, westwards in the valley adjacent to it.

"Is that air currents?" he had asked Leo.

"Blimey, think I can blow that far?" Leo had retorted brusquely, panting as he heaved a large canvas sailbag along the deck.

That somehow had set the tone for the voyage, Anthony recalled. Whenever he'd opened his mouth they'd pounced on him. It wasn't deliberate nastiness, it was just that he was an outsider and they were too wrapped up in recalling the race down. He didn't speak their language.

"That's where *Laurine* got becalmed last year," Old Mac would say, nodding to a little bay near the southern end of Storm Bay.

"Here's where we set the spinnaker," Leo would add. "We got a pile of wind out here and they just sat without a breath in there."

But the talk of race tactics dwindled with the reality of their approach to the open ocean. By the way the watches were made out Anthony sensed his position on board. He was the one of whom they were unsure.

Mr. Fred put him on the port watch with Chris, Old Mac and Bill. Bernard, Roy, Leo and Les were to be the starboard, Stewart was cook and Mr. Fred the navigator and wireless man.

"Two men must be on deck at all times," Mr. Fred said to Anthony. "Four, when we're manoeuvring. *Saga* handles well but she's old and the equipment's heavy."

So Anthony was with Old Mac and he was glad. He'd learn from him and he hoped to earn his respect. The best for'ard hand on the coast, they said in Sydney. Old Mac had sailed in every local ocean race anyone could remember and was limber and strong with a gnarled deeply-grooved face and grey eyes under bushy brows. In the wildest weather he went out on the bowsprit gripping it with his toes. He was a seaman by calling though a wholesale fruiterer by occupation.

Anthony respected Chris too. He was a wiry man, a keen quiet sailor, an engineer with Imperial Chemicals, conscientious and uncommunicative. With Bill acting skipper when Mr. Fred was not on board, it was obvious to Anthony that his companions were capable, and he only hoped Mr. Fred wouldn't be on deck too much to notice him. He knew Mr. Fred spent a lot of time on the wireless, not only getting the weather but the market reports. He was a stockbroker and never quite free of news from the land, and was bent on calling into Melbourne to do a little business.

"Unless we hit a snorter we won't lose much time," he'd said.

Well they'd hit one. It was surprising to Anthony how little the others cared. They'd all taken their annual three weeks' holiday for the Hobart race and once it was over it didn't matter how they fared on the cruise home as long as there was wind and food, rum for Old Mac and beer for Roy and Leo. To hell if she pounded.

Anthony, right from the first evening, his first watch with Old Mac, had regretted joining the ship. They'd sailed up to Cape Raoul hoping to get a good look at the strange strata of the organ pipe cliffs but had come about to round the Cape. Bill, at the wheel, gave the order. Old Mac and he were standing by to manoeuvre the three headsails. Anthony hadn't sailed for a while and with the slight changes in gear necessitated by *Saga's* transformation to ocean racing, plus the addition of the lifeline which had to be avoided by the sheets, he found he was hauling the wrong line.

"Not that you fool . . . you ass, Tony, the jib . . . hurry . . . what you got your specs for . . . blimey, Tony, if we'd had you on the race we'd just be getting to Hobart now." Old Mac cussed and fumed and muttered about the new hand to Chris and Bill. You'd have thought *Saga* was going on the Cape instead of being safely around and working seawards.

Anthony was the last to be relieved when they went down to dinner. When he came down the companionway into the crowded cabin only Mr. Fred greeted him. No one moved or handed him a plate and by the silence Anthony presumed that they had been talking about him. He tripped over Chris' foot as he edged past Bernard and Leo on his way to the galley and it was all he could do to avoid grabbing hold of the loaded table which swung on gimbals in the narrow floor space between the bunks.

"Grab a plate, Tony," Stewart called. "The spuds are in that pot, the corned beef over by the sink. Nothing fancy first night out."

By the time Anthony stepped over him too, and reached for a tin plate the men in the cabin were ready for tea. Being in the galley, he had to put his dinner down and assist Stewart in getting it.

"Right you are Tony, get to work there, scrape the plates," Stewart said good-naturedly, but not without a certain authoritarian intention.

From that time on Anthony was considered second cook and cabin boy to all. The pails of potatoes to peel, the buckets of slops to throw over seemed to wait till he came down off watch, and at night he was given the job of the inevitable coffee or chocolate making. It seemed as if the crew, after their unsuccessful participation in the race, needed a scapegoat and were going to make the best use of the one presented to them by his own volition in coming along.

"Here Anthony, what did you do with the primus pricker?"

"You stinker, Ant, leaving your lousy oilers on my bunk."

Anthony this, Tony that. They called him out for every little thing, and every external happening only added to the toll of his troubles.

One morning off Maria Island an albatross alighted on the water beside the *Saga*. It was grey and still, the yacht yawing in the swell, every block swinging loosely, the mainsail flapping idly so that there was continual fear of a gybe. The white-necked bird sat the swell not more than three feet from the deck, its handsome imperious head with its black glowing eyeballs surveying them with proud dignity. Les cut up some fresh barracouta he had caught. Anthony retrieved some old bread.

"She'll never touch bread, Tony," Old Mac said, speaking in a bored tone.

"Nonsense, all birds will."

Anthony knelt down, threw out a piece and felt a fool when the bird picked it up and dropped it immediately. Scrambling quickly to his feet he knocked his glasses against the lifeline and they fell to the deck, breaking one of the arms of the frame. Reaching to grab them, he let the loaf fall from his hand. It went into the water with a splash and the bird flew off.

"What in the hell did you want to come on deck for?" Les asked, picking up the fish remnants and throwing them over in disgust.

Going below for a bit of string to repair his glasses Anthony stopped short on the companionway.

"Tony's a nohoper," Stewart was saying. "Everything he touches goes wrong."

"Well why in the devil didn't he stay home?" Les growled.

"Cussedness," said Old Mac slowly. "He thinks he likes it. Harbour sailing fools a bloke about the real stuff."

Yes, Anthony figured. Perhaps Old Mac was right. It was all so different from the story he thought he'd have to tell to his mother and Anne.

What would he tell them when it came to the point, he wondered. Of the day off Schouten Island when Leo, scoffingly, had sent him up the mast with the binoculars to see if he could spot a "mermaid" in a remote farmhouse on a hill? Would he admit that he'd only gone half way up, his heart thumping as with each step the ladder swayed and he saw the deck below grow narrow as a knife handle? Would he tell the chaps at the office that *Saga* had an eighty-seven foot mast but that he was sent up it just to give the blokes a laugh? Or of the

day when he couldn't pick up a crayfish off the deck and even Chris had called him an idiot?

No, he couldn't really tell Anne he disliked the other blokes. Roy was all right even if he didn't say much. He was so sure and calm sitting there, hour after hour, his brown hands creased one over the other on the tiller. He envied Roy in a way and couldn't help but feel his presence. There was something about the light eyes and the jaunty angle of his blue cap sitting on the thatch of black hair. He realised himself to be inadequate, indeterminate in comparison with Roy. He felt that deep down Roy loved sailing as did Old Mac.

"We're gaining on Curtis now," Roy said, almost to himself, turning around to view the island astern. "See, the gap's narrowed between those pinnacles."

"Good," said Anthony. He wanted to add that it still seemed as if they were going five feet forward and being blown back four but didn't dare. It had suddenly occurred to him that Roy was fighting a personal battle with the rock, was absolutely determined that the *Saga* would get away from Curtis Island.

"Say, Anthony, would you get me a drink?" Roy asked suddenly. "Get a hell of a thirst in this wind. Don't light the primus. Beer, water, anything will do. Be careful getting along the deck."

"Sure." Anthony was glad of the activity and though anxious knew he could get along the deck safely. He polished his glasses, pulled the loop of string back over his ear and levered himself on to the steep weather deck. The legs of his oilskins billowed out as the wind rushed around him.

"Make a quick run for it," Roy shouted.

"I'll be right."

Anthony held on to the lifeline a minute and looked at the churned frothing water, at the waves, that, individual and resolute, marched one after the other towards the yacht. The twenty feet or so from the cockpit to the main hatch seemed an immense distance. He realised he could make it when *Saga* was in the valley between waves but he started late, only seconds before the next one came over. He covered the distance, got his left leg down the hatch on to the companionway as he felt his right foot slip from under him on the wet deck. Dammit, he thought, as he lost balance and felt his glasses slip. The next second the wave was breaking on board, sliding his right leg farther and farther down the slope. He tried to shift his weight back to the other foot but just as he did so he felt a thump and a quick little in-between wave hit the side of the ship, sending a column of slop right on to the hatch cover. In his effort to hang on

he knocked his glasses off. They slid like lightning down the deck into the scuppers and over the side. He was bewildered, unbelieving as he saw them vanish into the dark grey water. He cursed, regained his balance, drew his right leg into the hatch and proceeded below.

He leaned against the bulkhead, white as a sheet, his heart beating wildly, and tried with his dulled eyes to make out the scene in the cabin. Damn, damn, he said shakily, sitting down on the pile of oilskins, boots and caps that had accumulated on the wet floor. His eyes were getting used to the dim light and he could make out the semi-bearded inmates of the bunks visible beneath a clutter of coats and blankets. For a moment he forgot why he was there and then he remembered the drink for Roy and reached for the stormrail so he could traverse the stretch of slippery floor to the galley.

"Hey, Tony, hand me those fags, will you?"

It was Leo leaning on one elbow in his top bunk. Anthony reached down to scoop up a pack off the heavy brass ashtray that was swinging below him on the table and tossed them up to Leo.

"Thanks mate. Say, what's up? Where's your goggles?" Leo was peering down in kindly fashion. Anthony knew that with his white eyelids exposed he must look strange.

"Aw. Don't need them. Threw them to a mermaid." It didn't seem to be himself speaking.

"Good on yer." It was Old Mac. Anthony could make him out in the bunk below Leo's, his white hair visible against the dark mattress.

Anthony proceeded for'ard and almost fell into the galley, not seeing the small step up into the forepeak. Gaining his balance he stood in the entranceway a minute, trying to accustom himself to the violent movement. The forepeak area was lurching hideously like a wheel at a Fun Fair, jerking, swooping and dropping with nauseating irregularity. Anthony suddenly felt sick and dizzy as his eyes focused on the tilted stove, on the enamel jugs on their hooks, bumping drunkenly into each other and on the jars of tea and coffee and various kinds of sauce bottles tipped forward in their wooden railing. He knew there was nothing there he could use and made a swift dash across the small space of galley floor to the apple barrel. As he reached to get them the *Saga* lurched, Anthony was thrown against the stove and two apples rolled under it. He recovered his balance and was now absolutely determined to get something for Roy. It was his personal battle, as Roy's had been the island. But even as he struggled a wave, larger than most, must have hit the boat and he was flung down again. It was as if the ocean outside the hull knew how to outwit

him. A very real nausea engulfed him, half claustrophobia, half seasickness and he staggered to the sink and was sick. Just for a moment and then it was over and he rested his head against his arms.

"Anthony! What are you doing? Get the devil out of here. It will kill you." It was the skipper.

"Getting something for Roy, sir."

"Well, take these." Mr. Fred opened a locker and passed up a bottle of beer, a couple of salt-stained glasses, and a package of cheese. He reached blindly back for a biscuit tin and handed out a couple of handfuls of biscuits.

"Thanks very much, sir." Anthony stuffed the bottle down the front of his oilskin jacket and filled his pockets. Holding on with his free hand he made his way up to the hatch, paused, and ran swiftly along the deck to the cockpit.

"Thought you were overboard you were so long," Roy said quietly as he went to open the beer with his pocket knife.

"Lost my glasses," Anthony said abruptly and before Roy had the chance to comment he continued, "It's awful down there. Can't see why those chaps below want to waste a good vacation . . . pounding away in their bunks."

"Best place to be in this kind of stuff. Here . . . get something inside you." Roy handed Anthony a glass of beer.

"O.K., but easy on it."

He felt better afterwards, less impatient that hours were going by with nothing happening. They were sailing hard. It was monotonous and uncomfortable but no longer frightening.

"She's freshening a little," said Roy.

Anthony shrugged his shoulders. It didn't seem to make any difference. It was just a big sea and a continuous blow. He leaned back and watched the sun come out, break through the scud and transform the ocean, making its turbulence lustrous with colour. He glanced up as he heard voices.

Old Mac was walking along the deck, Mr. Fred was following him and they were looking around, out to sea, up to the pennant, back to Curtis Island, talking quietly.

Old Mac stood holding on to the runner a minute and then he made his way over Roy in the cockpit. Anthony heard him mutter, "Run her off, run her off."

Roy looking ahead answered quietly, "She's doing all right, Mac. We must have come up fifteen miles today. We'll make Port Phillip by morning."

"Naw, she's freshening. We'd be hove to tonight and then have to

wait for a flood tide at the Heads. No, we'll run her into Refuge Cove on the Prom while we have daylight."

"Mac's word goes, Roy," Mr. Fred said as he climbed into the cockpit.

Anthony sat very still. He felt he shouldn't be listening. He could sense Roy's disappointment.

"Want me to take her a while, Roy?" Old Mac asked.

"Not on your life."

"O.K., let her go," Mr. Fred said.

"Ease the sheet, Anthony." Roy was ready now but his voice was flat. Anthony sprang up. Old Mac was making for the staysail.

"O.K.," he shouted along the deck.

Roy pulled the tiller to him and *Saga's* bow fell away. With the aid of a couple of waves she slipped around to starboard, easily and quickly as a tightly reined horse suddenly allowed her head. On the port bow Anthony could see the mountains of Wilson's Promontory. They'd been hidden by the stormsail before. He hadn't realised how close to the coast they were. She'd reach into the Prom with no trouble at all but throw away in a few minutes what had taken a day's sailing to gain.

"Damn bad luck," Anthony said to Roy as Mr. Fred and Old Mac disappeared below.

Roy only shrugged his shoulders.

Anthony for inexplicable reasons felt disappointed, annoyed to be running in out of the storm. He was accustomed to it now. It was somehow wishy-washy to run for cover. Even the ship felt lax. She was no longer battling, pounding. The waves, hitting her on the quarter rather than on the bow, were giving her a push towards her destination. Curtis Island was far behind and another rock pile, Redondo Island, was visible on the starboard bow. The waves were sliding the *Saga* towards it.

Mr. Fred came on deck again with the binoculars. "Say, Redondo's quite pretty," he said looking towards the steep little island which reared clearly ahead with its red cliffs, rocky hillside and small turfed summit. "How about nipping below and rousing out Stewart," he turned to Anthony. "I think he could get the stove lit now and get us a cup of tea or something."

"Right," said Anthony, hopping up. He made his way below, taking one more quick look as he went at the promontory ahead with the rock piles of the Anser Islands standing out sharply just to the west of them.

It was 5.45 p.m. by the cabin clock. The scene was livelier this

time. Chris and Bill were smoking, talking. Leo was edging himself into a thick wool sweater, a difficult task in his top bunk.

"How's the night up top, Tony?" he inquired.

"Oh, like a millpond," said Anthony. "The Old Man even feels like tea."

"Damn good idea," said Leo. "I could use the old feedbag myself."

"Well, you get it," said Stewart gruffly from the next bunk. "You won't catch me in that blooming galley till we're in behind the Prom."

"All right, all right," Anthony retorted quickly. He felt suddenly very self-possessed and capable.

"We'll have Leo's brew," said the ex-wrestler with a knowing look to Anthony. "Let the chef continue his shut eye."

They went along to the galley and while Anthony made some toast Leo got a great pot of blended soup and stew going on the primus. Anthony started up on deck with the first steaming mugfuls for Mr. Fred and Roy, while Leo handed it out below. Anthony took his on deck.

The promontory was much closer now, a dark high land mass, with mountains extending inland standing out as dark thin wedges that caught the light. With the approach of land the waves had grown bigger and more regular, massive combers that picked up the *Saga* and sent her shooting forward like a surfboat. Old Mac was sitting amidships, mug in hand, watching as the following waves, coming out from under the yacht, almost inundated the bowsprit.

"Gawd . . . the times I've seen the Prom," Old Mac said sombrely, almost to himself.

Anthony, knowing better than to question him, made his way to the cockpit.

"Good stuff, Tony," said Roy appreciatively. "Mighty good. Here, take her a minute, would you? I could use a stretch."

Anthony, elated at being asked, hopped quickly down and took the tiller. He had been watching Roy and felt quite able to handle the ship. He initially pushed with all his strength to starboard to keep the *Saga's* nose on the promontory light. Then the wave caught her and swung her around into the channel between the Prom and Redondo. He kept his eyes ahead, deciding not to look around at the tremendous seas chasing them. These waves were too big, fifteen feet they must have been and of tremendous width. They took complete charge of the *Saga* and, though she surged forward on each, she was left wallowing in the trough as they passed under her. It took all of Anthony's strength to keep her head on the Prom.

"Hold her up, hold her up," Roy kept saying as, smoking a cigar-

ette, he sat beside Mr. Fred and studied the chart. He said it as a refrain, knowing by the feel of the ship how she was faring.

Anthony was content. He felt adequate. Something seemed to have changed, he didn't really know what. He felt drawn out of himself, absorbed in the yacht as if his body were part of it and the slow rhythm of its movement was his rhythm also. All weariness, nausea and resentment had disappeared. He had forgotten he was without glasses.

He was glad now that they were making for Refuge Cove. In the evening light the near-shore ocean world was growing beautiful. He saw the tall white tower of the lighthouse on the granite cliff at the south-east corner of the Prom. Two windswept grey houses were at its base, the lower one on the hill revealing itself as the residence. From its veranda steps a small path led around the edge of the cliff to a ramp descending to a landing stage below, just around the corner from the full force of the westerlies. He regretted that Anne had never seen the promontory. She'd love it with the sun shining on the lighthouse and the black line of mountains in the background. It was funny about women. They loved views, high wild places, yet acted so abashed and somehow sentimental when you took them there.

"Look at that spray," said Mr. Fred as a great shaft of sunlight yellowed the cliffs of Redondo and lit up the surf at its base. Columns of it were shooting into the air and quivering perceptibly in the sun as if reluctant to return to the sea.

"There's a ship," called Anthony suddenly as, looking to starboard, he had just distinguished the nose of a small brown-decked collier pitching with a great smother of foam into the seas between Redondo and the Prom.

"Yep," said Roy. "I've been watching her. Thank God we're not on her. You wouldn't have a hope if her steering gave."

"Guess not," said Mr. Fred. "It's a tough place, the Prom."

"Not that bad," said Anthony quietly. He was surprised at himself. Two hours before, if they'd met the collier, he would have given the world to be on her. Now he felt, for the first time, a loyalty to the yacht, a possessive feeling as if at least part of it was his.

"Look out," said Roy suddenly. "There's a squall coming. I'll take her."

Anthony reluctantly slid over, moved from his commanding position and stood up behind Roy on the stern holding on to the boom, watching the ship as if from a bird's-eye view as she slid down the long slopes.

"Mind out there," said Roy. "She's going to hit hard in a minute."

The squall struck, rapid flurries across the water and then a continuous hard blow that made the yacht list to starboard. Strong driving rain came in from the south and obliterated the lighthouse, the ship, Redondo, everything. Anthony hopped in under cover in the cockpit as the hail came, great chunks of it that you could pick up off the deck. He heard a hiss as the sharp little pellets dissolved in the sea. Roy kept their north-easterly course by the compass only.

When they came out of the squall they were past the lighthouse and abreast of Waterloo Bay, within the shelter of the promontory. The big waves were left behind, and the smaller coastal swell caused the *Saga* to roll gently. The sun broke through a rift in the clouds and an immense rainbow lay in their path, its arc stretching over their heads back to Redondo Island.

One by one the crew reappeared, Bernard wrapped in Mr. Fred's coat, Leo in an enormous red sweater and very small white shorts, Chris in a battered old grey raincoat. Bill, spruce and efficient in a blue zipper jacket and beret, relieved Roy at the tiller, resuming his customary role of command of the ship when making or leaving port.

"So you kept your eye on the storm did you, Ant?" Bill turned to inquire of him.

Anthony nodded. Everyone was intent, watching the shore. They were not more than twenty yards from it, the water being very deep right to the granite. Grassy banks covered with shrubs and small trees led back the two or three hundred yards to the hills. The bush was grey and still in the dusk and the smell of the gums came across the water. The *Saga* rounded a bluff which revealed itself as the southerly entrance to a small bay. In the distance was an inviting white beach edging a slope of fire-blackened trees. High up the trees ended and on the short grassy clearing leading to the summit a white rock stood out.

"There's the marker," said Old Mac quietly to Mr. Fred. "That white rock. That's how you tell Refuge from Sealers' Cove. They're alike from the sea but this is it." He stood up and pulled his battered felt hat over his ears.

The *Saga* entered the bay, her sails softly filled with the cool south wind that came from the hills across the harbour. The sea broke quietly against the boulders and carved on one they saw a date, a large 1912.

"This cove saved many an old whaler," Mr. Fred said.

The channel was narrow, the headlands sombre in the dusk, but the

Saga had enough way on to manoeuvre. Shortly they came about and headed for an inner entrance, leaving the hill marker to starboard. They rounded a rocky promontory into the harbour, and saw a trawler and a small yacht, already with riding lights on, anchored within. In the distance was a narrow beach flanked with trees. High hills surrounded the bay and two stars, the first of the evening, were visible in a gap in the skyline.

"Other wise ones," said Mr. Fred as they drew closer to the trawler.

Anthony felt he'd never seen a more welcome sight than those boats in the remote cove. Two men visible only as black forms were standing talking on the deck of the trawler, their voices but a murmur across the water.

"The *Mary Norlung*," Leo said, spelling out the white letters which stood out clearly against the dark green hull.

"Well, there's your nightclub," said Mr. Fred. "Time off tonight, Leo."

"Yes, but we've got no dinghy, sir."

"Darn," said Mr. Fred. "That's the worst of racing. Trying to travel light. We'll blow up the rubber boat in the morning and see if we can manage in that."

The *Saga* came up quietly about fifty yards from the trawler, her bow but a few feet from the shore of the eastern arm of the bay.

"O.K., let her go," shouted Bill. "Lower the main."

Anthony, busy with Leo on the foredeck, helped drop the pick. Everything went without a hitch and he leapt back along the deck to help furl the stormsail. Somehow, though he couldn't see well, he knew he was pulling his weight. Old Mac, supervising the stowing of sails, cursed them all with equal venom. Everyone hurried. It was cold on the dark deck, with a slight wind that sent ripples across the water.

"If there's the slightest breeze in here it means it's blowing a gale outside," Mr. Fred said.

But after being in the storm the cove seemed hushed, extraordinarily beautiful too, thought Anthony. The moon rose across the narrow entrance as the *Saga* fell back on her anchor.

"What do we give the gang for supper?" Stewart archly asked as Anthony went below. Pulling off his jacket, he sat down at the table and lit a cigarette.

"You figure it out," Anthony mumbled.

"Well, fruit cake and coffee it is. That's the lot. I'm going to do a spot of fishing," Stewart called out from the galley as he pumped water into the kettle.

Anthony went up again on deck. He had no intention of helping Stewart. Night had fallen, the wind had dropped and in the stillness he could hear the men on the *Mary Norlung*. Mr. Fred hailed them. They were shark fishermen out of Port Welshpool headed for Cape Barren Island.

"We've got a fire in the woodstove down below," one called. "Come on over and get warm."

"Got no dinghy."

"We'll come over and get you after supper," came the voice from a dark figure.

Across the water on the little yacht there were lights but no sign of anyone. Stewart called them down to coffee. Anthony, wedged in between Chris and Bill at the table, had never tasted anything better than the great slab of fruit cake handed to him by Bill.

"Boy, oh boy, this is it," said Leo, as Old Mac passed his cup and plate of cake up to him in his high bunk.

"You're charged extra for supper in bed," said Mr. Fred rubbing his hands.

"Aw come, sir, just giving those below more room," Leo said in a comic mincing tone. Everybody laughed.

"Well, you'll all get a good sleep tonight," said Mr. Fred. "We don't even need an anchor watch. Where you'll all fit with no one on deck, I don't know, but you figure it out . . . double up, use the sail locker or something. Anyway, I'm off to the *Mary Norlung*. Any-one want to come?"

He went up on deck and Bernard followed. Anthony heard a dinghy approaching, the small bump against the side, followed soon by the diminishing sound of the rowlocks. Old Mac brought a bottle of rum from his secret supply, and Leo pulled up the floor boards to get a couple of bottles of beer from the bilge. Leo, Old Mac, Bill and Les poured themselves a drink and gave one to Anthony. Roy took one, drank it fast and turned in.

All of a sudden they heard someone hailing them. Anthony went up on deck. It was the two young men from the yacht in their cockle-shell dinghy. They had rowed over to take a look at the *Saga*.

"Welcome aboard," Anthony heard himself saying with almost proprietary pride in his voice.

He took them below, introduced them around. They sat down shyly, a lanky, fair, rather frail-looking fellow named Dick Thomas next to Old Mac, and a more robust dark chap named Barry Martin, with a moustache, edged in by Chris. Glasses were produced, and another bottle.

Dick, who was about twenty-four, told how they'd built their twenty-five footer the *Temptress* in their backyard and were off on a summer cruise to Gippsland, hoping perhaps to return via Tasmania.

"You're not going across Bass Strait in that?" Anthony asked astonished.

"We hope to. Depends how long it is before we get away from here. We've been sitting here three days now, waiting for the weather to lift."

"You'd better hang on," said Anthony emphatically. "We really got it today. Just a few hours ago you couldn't have paid me to stay aboard. Slap on the nose all day."

"Were you scared?" Dick asked.

"Well, frankly no . . . not exactly. I mean, I didn't thrive on it. Felt sort of useless. Mucked things up losing my glasses, damn near thought I'd go myself." He felt the truth slipping out, almost against his will.

"You did all right, Tony," said Old Mac interrupting. "First storm isn't kid's stuff. You saw it through."

"Yup," said Anthony slowly.

"Would you go out into another one tomorrow?" Dick asked.

"Well, not tomorrow," said Anthony thoughtfully. "Tomorrow I want to sleep. Maybe the day after. I don't know." He stretched his arms and yawned. "Got to get home sometime. Boy, but I'm tired."

He leaned back against the wall and closed his eyes. Les took up the conversation.

Anthony felt himself dropping off. He must turn in but he couldn't move. He leaned back against the bunk, then edged along it away from the others. There was just room to put his legs up. Just for a minute, he thought, and then he'd get up, say good-night and stagger off. He fought to keep his eyes open but couldn't. A few minutes later he awoke. Old Mac was opening another bottle of beer.

"She's clinker built," Barry was saying.

He felt his shoulder being prodded. It was Les.

"That's my bunk," Les said.

"Oh, go to blazes," said Anthony casually.

Les moved away.

Anthony turned over slowly towards the skin of the ship. He somehow felt good, at peace, as if something had happened though really nothing much had happened at all. It had been rough. It was now calm. He gave a sharp yawn and stretched out his legs. The last thing he heard was the creak of the rudder under the ship.

Biographical Notes

ETHEL ANDERSON

Born at Leamington, England, but spent childhood in Australia and educated at C. of E. Girls' Grammer School, Sydney; married Brigadier-General A. T. Anderson, lived on the Indian frontier and then in Sydney and Canberra, when he was Private Secretary to Governors of N.S.W., and to Lord Gowrie. Publications: *Squatter's Luck*, 1942 (poems); *Adventures in Appleshire*, 1944, *Timeless Garden*, 1945, *Sunday at Yarralumla*, 1947 (poems); *Indian Tales*, 1947; *Joy of Youth*, 1950; poems, short stories and essays published widely in England, America, India and Australia. Her poem "Hagar" has been set by John Antill to a full orchestral score. Now living at Turramurra, N.S.W.

DOROTHY AUCHTERLONIE (Mrs. H. M. Green)

Born Sunderland, England, 1915; educated Sunderland and Sydney; M.A. University of Sydney; teacher and journalist; returned to teaching in 1951 and now at the Presbyterian Girls' College, Warwick, Qld.; has published one book of verse; poems and articles in periodicals.

SIDNEY J. BAKER

Born Wellington, N.Z., 1912; author, journalist; lives in Sydney; his books include *The Australian Language*, *Australia Speaks* and *Australian Pronunciation*; has written three sections of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; twice awarded grants by the Commonwealth Literary Fund; has also received fellowships from the New Zealand Literary Fund and the Australian Council for Educational Research; in recent years has concentrated on research in linguistic psychology; has had more than 20 papers on the subject published in overseas scientific journals.

PETER BLADEN

Born Subiaco, W.A., 1922. Graduated University of W.A.; served with R.A.N. during the war; has lived and worked in all the Australian states, recently proofreader on the Melbourne *Age*; now living at Kew, Vic. Publications: *Selected Poems*, 1945; *The Old Ladies of Newington*, 1954. *Lazy Walkabout* is his first prose work.

JOHN BLIGHT

Born Unley, S.A.; lived mainly in Qld. where he is now employed as a cost accountant with a timber company at Maryborough; has published two volumes of verse: *The Old Pianist*, 1945; *The Two Suns Met*, 1954; and poems in the *Bulletin*, *Australian Poetry* and *Jindyworobak*.

VINCENT BUCKLEY

Born 1926; educated at Jesuit College and Melbourne University; invalided out of R.A.A.F. during the last war; published *The World's Flesh*, 1954 (poems); poems and criticism in various periodicals.

DAVID CAMPBELL

Born 1915 at Ellerslie, Adelong, N.S.W.; B.A. (Cantab.); educated at the King's School, Sydney, and at Cambridge, where he represented England against Ireland and Wales in football; in 1938 he returned to Australia, and at the outbreak of war joined the R.A.A.F., became a Wing-Commander and won a D.F.C. and Bar; now a farmer near Canberra. Publications: *Speak With the Sun*, London, 1949; poems and short stories in the *Bulletin*, poems in several anthologies; another volume of poems is now with the printer.

NANCY CATO (Mrs. Eldred Norman)

Born Adelaide, 1917; educated at Presbyterian Girls' College and Adelaide University; has been journalist and grapepicker. Poems and stories published in *Bulletin*, *Coast to Coast*, *Australian Poetry*, and literary journals. Publications: *The Darkened Window*, 1950; assistant-editor *Poetry* 1946-1947; editor *Jindyworobak Anthology* 1950; a second volume of poems is now with the printer, and she is at present working on a long historical novel of the River Murray.

MANNING CLARK

Born Burwood, N.S.W.; educated at Cowes, Belgrave, Melbourne (M.A.) and Oxford; has published two volumes of *Select Documents in Australian History* (1788-1850, 1851-1900) and writes reviews for the *Age* on history, cricket and religion; is Professor of History, Canberra University College.

KEN COLLIE

Born Melbourne; served A.I.F. in the Second World War as officer commanding Occupation broadcasting service in Japan, and later in Korea; has worked at a variety of jobs, and has published verse, fiction and topical articles in a number of magazines and newspapers; now a journalist with the Melbourne *Argus*.

ALEXANDER CRAIG

Born Malvern, Vic., 1923; obtained B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Ed. University of Melbourne; served with A.I.F. 1942-6 in New Guinea and on Cape York and Thursday Island; now Senior English Master at Mount Scopus College, Burwood, Vic. Publications: *Far-Back Country*, 1954 (poems); poems in *Australian Poetry* anthologies, *Jindyworobak Anthology*, 1949, *Australian Weekend Review*, *Direction*, *Meanjin*, *Poetry*, *Southerly*, and *Voices* (U.S.A.).

ROSEMARY de BRISSAC DOBSON

Born Sydney, 1920; educated at Frensham, N.S.W. and Sydney University; studied and taught art, and was later on the editorial staff of Angus and Robertson, publishers, Sydney; married Alexander Bolton; won *Sydney Morning Herald* prize for poetry 1946 with "The Ship of Ice". Publications: *In a Convex Mirror*, 1944; *The Ship of Ice*, 1948; *Child with a Cockatoo*, 1955; edited *Australian Poetry* 1949-50.

PHILIP DORTER

Born Meekatharra, W.A., 1918; educated State schools and Perth Modern School; on the editorial staff of the *Bulletin* since 1937; served with the A.I.F. and R.A.A.F., 1941-6. Publications: Short stories.

GEOFFREY DUTTON

Born Kapunda, S.A., 1922; B.A. (Oxon.); served as Flight-Lieut. R.A.A.F. in last war; studied at Oxford after the war, lived in France and London. Publications: *Nightflight and Sunrise*, 1944 (poems); *The Mortal and the Marble*, 1950 (novel); *A Long Way South*, 1953, *Africa in Black and White*, 1956 (travel books).

MARY DURACK (Mrs. Horrie Miller)

Born Adelaide, S.A., 1913; has lived all her life in W.A., much of it in the North, where her family were pioneers of the cattle industry. Publications: *Allabout*, *Chunuma*, *Son of Djaro*, and *Keep Him My Country* (all novels); also a number of children's books, all illustrated by her sister Elizabeth.

ROBERT FITZGERALD, O.B.E.

Born Hunter's Hill, Sydney, 1902, where he now lives; educated at Sydney Grammar School and the University. Government Surveyor in Fiji, now land surveyor; awarded O.B.E. for poetic achievement and Gold Medal of Australian Literary Society, Melbourne, for best book of verse by Australian author in 1938; also won Sesquicentenary Prize Poem competition with "Essay on Memory". Publications: *The Greater Apollo*, 1927 (printed privately); *To Meet the Sun*, 1929; *Moonlight Acre*, 1938; *Between Two Tides*, 1952; *This Night's Orbit*, 1953; editor of *Australian Poetry* 1942, *Heemskerk Shoals* 1949.

GWEN HARWOOD

Born Qld., now living in Tas.; has had poetry published in *Meanjin*, *Southerly*, and the *Bulletin*.

A. C. HEADLEY

Lives in Sydney, N.S.W.; has had stories published in most Australian magazines, and in several anthologies, including the Oxford World Classics; works with a large advertising agency. Publications: Two volumes of short stories.

JOHN HETHERINGTON

Born Sandringham, Vic., 1907; educated All Saints' Grammar School; as journalist-reporter, special writer, A.A.P. Representative in London, New York, war correspondent for London *Times*, *Manchester Guardian*, and Australian evening newspaper in Middle East 1940-3; and for Melbourne *Herald* in Allied Invasion of Western Europe, 1944-5; Editor-in-Chief Adelaide *News* 1945-9; special writer Melbourne *Herald*; Deputy Editor of Melbourne *Argus*; now writing daily front-page column for Melbourne *Age*; won *Sydney Morning Herald* prize for war book in 1947 with *The Winds Are Still*. Publications: *Airborne Invasion*, 1943 (story of Crete); *Australian Soldier*, 1943; *The Winds Are Still*, 1949; *Blamey*, 1954; short stories and verse in newspapers and magazines.

ALEC DERWENT HOPE

Born Cooma, N.S.W., 1907; B.A. (Sydney and Oxford); educated at Leslie House School, Hobart, Bathurst and Fort Street High Schools, N.S.W., and at the Universities of Sydney and Oxford; has been teacher, vocational psychologist, Lecturer in English at the Sydney Teachers' College and Melbourne University; now Professor of English, Canberra University College; critic and reviewer for various Australian periodicals and for the A.B.C. Publications: *The Wandering Islands*, 1955 (poems).

T. A. G. HUNGERFORD

Born Perth, W.A. where he was educated; served in the A.I.F. 1940-5 and in the Occupation Force in Japan 1946-7; has published three novels, *The Ridge and the River*, *Riverslake*, *Sowers of the Wind*; Crouch Gold Medallist, and twice prizewinner in *Sydney Morning Herald* literary competitions; now journalist on staff of the Commonwealth News and Information Bureau.

NANCY KEEsing

Born Sydney 1923; educated at Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School and Frensham, Mittagong; Diploma of Social Studies from Sydney University; did clerical work in the Dept. of the Navy during the war; and as a trained social worker held various jobs until 1951; married to Dr. A. M. Hertzberg, Ph. D.; one daughter. Publications: *Imminent Summer*, 1951 (poems); poems and short stories published in the *Bulletin* and other periodicals. Collaborated with Douglas Stewart in editing *Australian Bush Ballads*, published in 1955, and a projected companion volume of *Old Bush Songs*; *Three Men and Sydney*, 1956 (poems).

GAVIN LONG, O.B.E.

Born Foster, Vic., 1901; B.A. (Syd.); educated at All Saints' College, Bathurst, and University of Sydney; on staff of the *Argus*, 1926-31, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1941-3; War correspondent in France, Middle East and S.-W.P.A., 1939-43, when appointed general editor, Australian official war history. Publications: *To Benghazi*, 1952; *Greece, Crete and Syria*, 1953 (both being volumes of the official war history).

MERRICK LONG, M.M.

Born Kew, Vic., 1909; educated at "Shore", Sydney, and All Saints' College, Bathurst, N.S.W.; worked as a jackeroo on several stations in N.S.W. and Qld.; served in A.I.F. 1939-45, with 2/3 Battalion and on staff of 6th Division; awarded M.M. in first Libyan campaign, 1941; now manager of "Brenda" station, Goodooga, N.S.W.

JAMES McAULEY

Born Lakemba, N.S.W., 1917; graduated M.A., Dip.Ed. Sydney University 1937; during the war was in the Australian Army Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs. Since 1946 Senior Lecturer in Government at the Australian School of Pacific Administration. Published work consists of poetry and critical essays; *Under Aldebaran*, a first volume of verse, was published in 1946; a new volume, *A Vision of Ceremony*, has been published this year; a volume of essays on Literature, Art and Culture, is in preparation; has this year been appointed editor of a new quarterly magazine, *Quadrant*.

RONALD McCUAIG

Born Newcastle 1908; educated at Mayfield and Killara schools; after writing for broadcasting became journalist on staff of the *Wireless Weekly*, *A.B.C. Weekly*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Smith's Weekly*, and now of the *Bulletin*. Publications: *Vaudeville*, 1938, *The Wanton Goldfish*, 1941, *Quod Ronald McCuaig*, 1946 (all poetry); also *Tales Out of Bed*, 1944 (stories and criticism).

JAMES EDMOND MACDONNELL ("Macnell")

Born Toowoomba, N. Qld., 1919; joined the R.A.N. as ordinary seaman in 1934, gained commission in 1944; after 14 years in the Navy, joined staff of the *Bulletin* to write Personal Page; freelance work widely published in Australia and overseas. Publications: *Fleet Destroyer*, Melbourne, 1945; *Valiant Occasions*, 1952; *Gimme the Boats*, London, 1953; *Wings off the Sea*, London, 1953, *John Brady, Leading Seaman; Commander Brady; Captain Mettle* (a boys' story of the sea). There has been an American edition of *Valiant Occasions*, while part of this novel was used in a Norwegian anthology of sea-stories.

RAYMOND C. MALEY

Born Sydney 1912; educated Fort Street High School, Sydney; joined *Sydney Morning Herald* 1930 as cadet journalist; loaned to Australian Associated Press 1941 as war correspondent, reported war in Malaya, Netherlands East Indies (as then known); rejoined *Sydney Morning Herald*, went to New Guinea as war correspondent, until appointed as S.M.H. chief political correspondent in Canberra; joined Melbourne *Argus* in similar capacity 1950; Commonwealth News and Information Bureau 1952; now Press Attaché, Australian Embassy, Washington; home, Canberra.

ALAN MARSHALL

Born Noorat, Vic., 1902; earns his living as a writer; has travelled widely over Australia in a caravan securing material; lives at Caulfield, Vic. Publications: *These Are My People*, 1948 (travel); *Tell Us About the Turkey, Jo*, (stories); *Ourselves Writ Strange*, 1948 (travel); *Pull Down the Blind*, 1949 (sketches); *How Beautiful are thy Feet*, 1949 (novel); *Bumping into Friends*, 1950 (sketches); *People of the Dream-time*, 1952 (aboriginal myths); *I Can Jump Puddles*, 1955 (autobiography); *How's Andy Going*, 1956 (short stories); short stories published in anthologies and Australian, English and American journals.

RAY MATHEW

Born Sydney, N.S.W., 1929; became a teacher for three years in small schools in the central west of N.S.W.; has written four one-act plays (one of which won a prize) and two full-length plays (one commended in the Jubilee Competition). Publications: *With Cypress Pine*, 1951 (poems); *Song and Dance*, 1956 (poems); poems in the *Bulletin*, *Southerly*, *Meanjin*, and in several anthologies; *We Find the Bunyip*, play performed in 1955.

T. INGLIS MOORE

Born Camden, N.S.W., 1901; B.A. (Sydney), M.A. (Oxon.); educated at Sydney Grammar School, Universities of Sydney and Oxford; Associate Professor of English in University of Philippines, Manila, 1928-31; leader writer on the *Sydney Morning Herald* 1934-40; served in the A.I.F. 1940-5; now Senior Lecturer in Australian Literature, Canberra University College; member of Commonwealth Literary Advisory Board; President Fellowship of Australian Writers, Sydney, 1934-5, Canberra 1952-3. Publications: *Love's Revenge*, 1930 (in Philippine Plays); *The Half Way Sun*, 1935 (novel); *Adagio in Blue*, 1938 (poems); *Emu Parade*, 1942; *Six Australian Poets*, 1942; *We're Going Through*, 1943 (radio verse play); also editor, *Best Australian One-Act Plays*, 1937, and *Australian Poetry*, 1946; contributor to *Trusteeship in the Pacific*, 1949.

JOHN MORRISON

Born Sunderland, England 1904; emigrated to Australia in 1923. Has worked as gardener, labourer, station and farm hand, waterside worker; awarded Commonwealth Literary Fund Fellowships 1947 and 1948. Publications: *The Creeping City*, 1949, *Port of Call*, 1950 (novels); *Sailors Belong Ships*, 1947, and *Black Cargo*, 1955 (short stories); and a collection of short stories published in Poland last year under the title *Targ Niewelnikew*.

D'ARCY NILAND

Born Glen Innes, N.S.W.; educated at St. Joseph's, Glen Innes; led an itinerant life, doing bush work for some years; married to Ruth Park, he is now living in Sydney. Prizes include *Sydney Morning Herald* Literary Competition, 1949, first award for short story, second award for *Gold in the Streets* (novel); C'wealth Jubilee Literary Competition, 1951, second prize for *The Big Smoke* (novel), second prize short story, special prize short story; Australian prizewinner First and Second World Short Story Quests, *Herald Tribune* 1950 and 1952. Publications: *The Shiralee*, 1955 (novel); *Make Your Stories Sell*, 1955; *Without You in Heaven*, 1955; *The Drums Go Bang* (autobiography in collaboration with his wife); and more than 500 short stories.

MARY PINNEY

Born Edgecliff, Sydney, 1897; educated in N.S.W. and England; lived in various parts of N.S.W. and Tas., and in Papua off and on from 1910-37; has published poetry and short stories over a number of years, and now lives in Bowral, N.S.W.

JAMES POLLARD

Born and educated in Yorkshire, England; emigrated early to Australia; served with the A.I.F. in both world wars; has written novels, short stories, children's stories, and articles for Australian and overseas journals, and broadcast talks and stories for the A.B.C.; was assistant editor of the 1954 *New Horizons in Western Australia*; in 1940 compiled an anthology of stories and verse by W.A. writers. A past president of the W.A. branch of the Fellowship of Australian Writers. Publications include *The Bushland Man* (novel); *Twenty-Eight Tales* (short stories); *Cheno* (tale for children).

R. S. PORTEOUS

Born Melbourne; served with the 8th Light Horse in the 1914-18 war; discharged medically unfit from R.A.N. in Second World War, he became chief officer of a cargo ship supplying troops on the New Guinea coast; has been overseer on cattle station, seaman and launch owner; living at Mackay, N. Qld. Publications: Two novels, two vols. of short stories (one for boys), and over 100 short stories published in Australia and U.S.A.

KATHARINE SUSANNAH PRICHARD

Born Levuka, Fiji, 1884; educated S. Melbourne College; wrote for Australian newspapers, then journalist in London between 1908-16; visited America, France and Switzerland; returned to Australia after winning first Aust. prize in all-British £1,000 novel competition with *The Pioneers* in 1915. Publications: *The Pioneers*, *Windlestraws*, 1916, *Black Opal*, 1921, *Working Bullocks*, 1926, *Coonardoo*, 1928 (£500 prize for novel), *Haxby's Circus*, 1929, *Intimate Strangers*, 1939, *Moon of Desire*, 1941, *The Roaring Nineties*, 1946, *Golden Miles*, 1948, *Winged Seeds*, 1950 (all novels). *The Gray Horse*, 1924 (*Art in Australia* prize); *The Wild Oats of Han*, 1928 (children's story), *Kiss on the Lips*, 1932; *Potch and Colour*, 1945 (short stories); *Brumby Innes*, 1927 (prize play); *Earth Lover*, 1930 (poems). Her work has been translated into Russian, Hungarian, French, Czech, Slovak, Polish, Rumanian, German, and Afrikaans. Married 1919 Capt. H. V. Throssell, V.C.; has one son, R. P. Throssell; lives at Greenmount, W.A.

ALAN RIDDELL

Born Townsville 1927; spent childhood in Australia, educated in Scotland, where he attended Edinburgh University after being demobbed from the Royal Navy in 1948; was a theatre critic in Edinburgh for three years; returned to Australia in 1955; journalist with the Melbourne *Age*, now working as a feature writer on the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*; while in Europe helped to found the Paris literary review *Merlin*, besides founding and editing the Scottish literary quarterly *Lines*. Publications: Verse in reviews, and *Beneath the Summer*, a pamphlet.

ROLAND ROBINSON

Born County Clare, Ireland, 1912 and came to Australia when he was nine. Worked in western N.S.W. and the N.T. at various outback occupations; lived with Roper River aborigines and collected mythology which formed the book *Legend and Dreaming*; collaborated on script for international award-winning film "Back of Beyond"; received Commonwealth Literary Fund Award for verse *Tumult of the Swans*, 1953; awarded C.L.F. Fellowship to study myths and legends in the N.T. 1954. Travelled by motor-cycle, truck, aeroplane and lugger, visiting various tribes to gather material for *The Crested Serpent*. Publications: *Beyond the Grass-Tree Spears*, 1944; *Language of the Sand*, 1948; *Tumult of the Swans*, 1954; *Legend and Dreaming*, 1952 (mythology, prose); verse, short stories, criticism in magazines and anthologies.

ERIC ROLLS

Born Grenfell 1923; educated Fort Street High School, Sydney; now farmer and grazier at Boggabri, N.S.W. Publications: Poems in various magazines and anthologies.

JOHN DAVID RUTHERFORD

Educated at Auburn Central School and Melbourne Technical College, Vic.; employed at Australian War Memorial; served with 7th Division in Middle East (Tobruk and New Guinea) from 1940; transferred to Military History Section in 1945; prizewinner in short story competition (Australian Army Christmas Book publications) and a successful contributor to various newspapers and journals; since 1939-45 war has contributed mainly to War Memorial publications and specialises in humorous stories.

DAVID ROWBOTHAM

Born Toowoomba, Queensland, 1924; educated Toowoomba Grammar School and Queensland and Sydney Universities; worked as teacher and freelance journalist; was for some years Sydney correspondent for Qld. Provincial Press; worked on editorial staff of *Australian Encyclopaedia* as research officer for *Chambers' Encyclopaedia*, London; worked as daily columnist for the Toowoomba *Chronicle*; now on literary staff of Brisbane *Courier Mail*; served in South Pacific as wireless operator in R.A.A.F. Publications: Poems and short stories in magazines and anthologies; *Ploughman and Poet*, 1954 (Commonwealth Literary Fund and the Lyre-Bird Writers).

JOHN ROWLAND

Born Armidale, N.S.W., 1925; educated Cranbrook School, Sydney, and Sydney University; served in Moscow, London, and Indo-China on the staff of the Dept. of External Affairs; now First Secretary at the Australian Embassy in Washington; received award in *Sydney Morning Herald* competition for verse in 1951. Publications include verse in magazines and anthologies.

NEILMA SIDNEY

Born San Francisco, 1922, daughter of Sidney Myer; grew up in Melbourne; educated St. Catherine's, Toorak, and one year at University of Melbourne; married to an American, 1941; has two sons; finished B.A. at Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, doing some work in the Stanford School of Creative Writing; returned to Australia 1954; contributes to the *Age* Literary Supplement; "The Return" is her first published story.

ELEANOR SMITH

Born in W.A.; has written a book on Rottnest Island, *Isle of Girls*, and has had poems, short stories and articles published in several Australian magazines.

W. E. H. STANNER

Born Sydney 1905; educated Parramatta High School; M.A. of Sydney University; Ph.D. of London University; served in A.I.F. 1942-6, Lt-Colonel, in N. Australia, Europe, British North Borneo; Australian Commissioner, S. Pacific Commission, since 1953; Reader in Comparative Social Institutions, Australian National University, Canberra; Fellow and Bursar of University House, A.N.U.; has carried out anthropological research work in Northern and Central Australia, Kenya (first Director Makerere Inst. Social Research, Uganda, 1947-9), Tanganyika, New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa and Cook Islands over the years 1932-54. Publications include *The South Seas in Transition*, 1953.

DOUGLAS STEWART

Born Eltham, N.Z., 1913; educated at New Plymouth Boys' High School and Victoria University College, N.Z.; worked on staff of N.Z. newspapers, then worked passage to England; lived in Australia since 1938, and now editor of the Red Page of the *Bulletin*. Won A.B.C. competition for verse radio play with *The Golden Lover*. Publications: *Green Lions*, 1936, *The White Cry*, 1938, *Elegy for an Airman*, 1940, *The Dosser in Springtime*, 1946, *Glencoe*, 1947, *Sun Orchids*, 1952 (all poetry); *Ned Kelly*, 1943; *The Fire on the Snow* and *The Golden Lover*, 1943, *Shipwreck*, 1946 (all plays); *The Flesh and the Spirit*, 1947 (criticism); *The Birdsville Track and Other Poems*, 1955; *Australian Bush Ballads*, 1955, edited with Nancy Keesing.

JOHN THOMPSON

Born Melbourne, 1907; B.A. Melbourne University; lived in England and Europe 1931-9; joined A.B.C. in 1939 and is now senior feature writer and producer in Sydney; served with A.I.F. 1942-5. War correspondent for A.B.C. in Rabaul and Java 1945. Publications include three books of verse and *Hubbub in Java*, 1946. Worked at B.B.C. in 1951, sent to Africa by A.B.C. in 1955.

RUSSEL WARD

Born Adelaide, 1914, and has lived in all states, except Tas., for periods of three or four years, including working holidays in the N.T.; taught at Geelong Grammar, Sydney Grammar, and N.S.W. State secondary schools; is Ph.D. Publications include three school textbooks, and a thesis on the social history of the Australian pastoral worker.

FRANCIS WEBB

Born Adelaide, 1925; educated Christian Brothers' High School, Lewisham, and University of Sydney; served in the R.A.A.F. during the Second World War; afterwards worked in Canada for three years; profession, labourer. Publications: *A Drum for Ben Boyd*, 1948; *Leichhardt in Theatre*, 1952 (poems); verse in *Bulletin* and in anthologies.

HELEN WILSON

Born Tasmania; Arts graduate of University of W.A.; her publications include over 100 articles, radio scripts, short stories and verse; one of the State finalists in recent World Short Story Contest; two stories recommended for publication by Jubilee Literary Short Story competition judges; winner of other competitions. Now living in W.A.; married; has three children.

JUDITH WRIGHT

Born Armidale, N.S.W. 1915; educated N.S.W. Correspondence and New England Girls' School, and Sydney University; spent a year in Europe, worked for University Commission and as Statistician at University of Queensland; awarded Commonwealth Literary Fund Fellowship in 1949. Publications: *The Moving Image*, 1946, *Woman to Man*, 1949, *The Gateway*, 1953, *The Two Fires*, 1955 (all poetry); edited *A Book of Australian Verse*.



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